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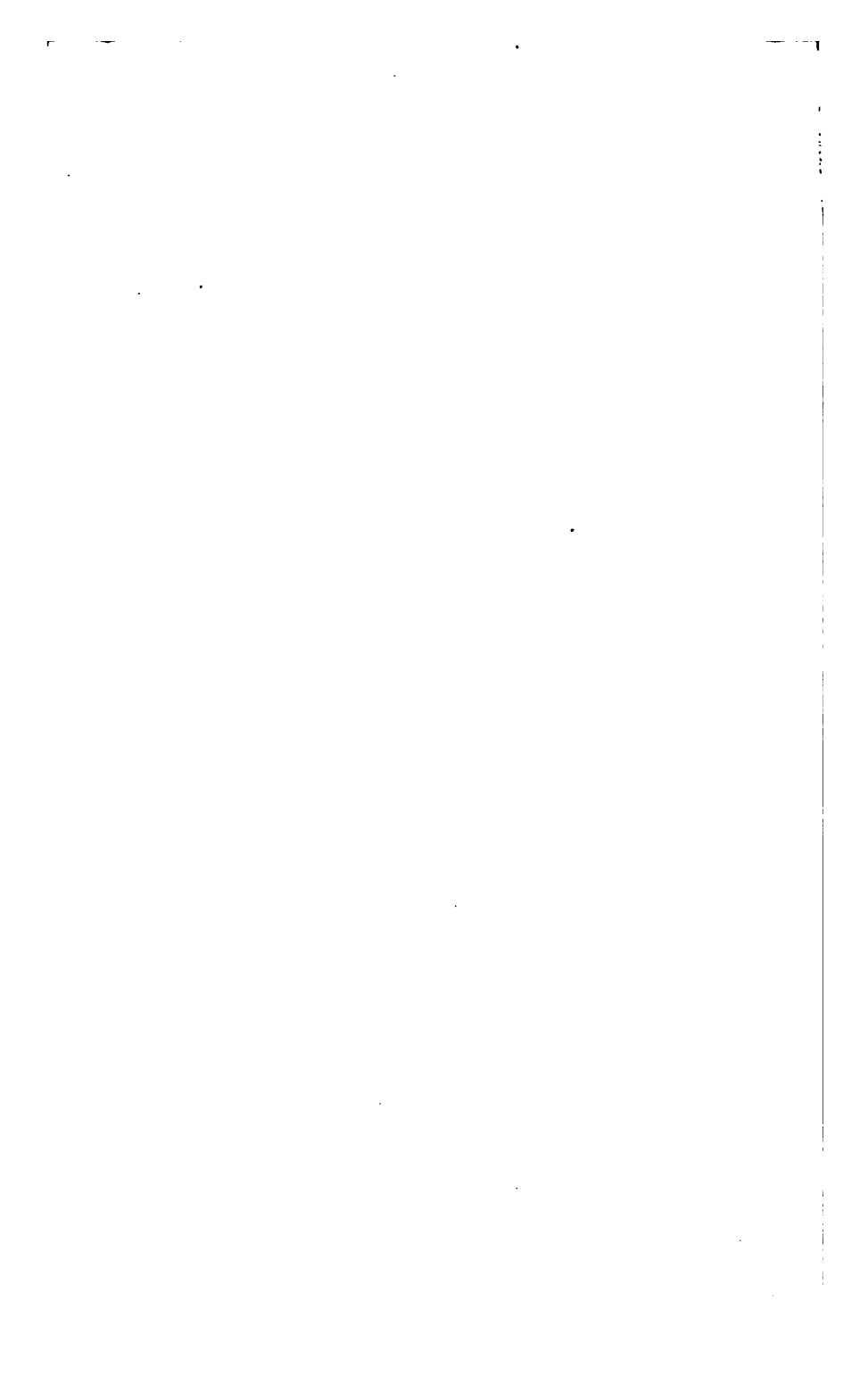
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VOL. I.—SEE PAGE 26.

PERCY BLAKE;

OR,

THE YOUNG RIFLEMAN.

BY

CAPTAIN RAFTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE GUARDS," "OUR INDIAN ARMY," &c.

"There was an ancient sage philosopher,
Who had read Alexander Ross over;
And swore the world, as he could prove,
Was made of fighting and of love."—HUDIBRAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1855.

249. x. 488.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

PERCY BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE IRISH BRIGADE.

IT is customary, I believe, with authors who have but little to relate, to press into their service every possible resource of the literary art; that, by the charm of their eloquence, they may hide the paucity of their material. The contrary, however, being my case, I trust the reader will be content to receive a plain, unvarnished tale of military life, instead of a flowing dissertation *de omnibus rebus*, which I have neither ability nor inclination to cook up for his amusement.

I was born in a small country town, in the south of Ireland, which has furnished more officers to the army, than any place in the United Kingdom of thrice its importance. I leave it to casuists to determine whether this was owing to the proverbial pugnacity of the Tipperary boys, or to the idle and unoccupied life of the small gentry, whose family pride made them scorn that trade which was best calculated to repair their family indigence. Certain it is, however, that the soil of many lands has been moistened by the blood, or has witnessed the sufferings of many of my townsmen and school-fellows ; who began their career in life as I did myself, about the commencement of that tremendous struggle, in which the genius and good-fortune of Napoleon sank, at length, under the wealth, the power, and the energies of Great Britain.

My family is traditionally said to be of Spanish descent ; but, without looking so far back into the misty days of Eld, it will be sufficient, as an appropriate introduction to

the sayings and doings of my own checquered existence, to state that it was one of the numerous Irish families ruined by a too faithful adherence to the cause of the Stuarts; the battle of the Boyne having effectually disposed of a handsome estate, which had belonged to the catholic branch of the Blakes for many preceding ages.

After that celebrated "passage of arms," my pugnacious ancestor, William Blake, who had exchanged his "dirty acres" for the doubtful honour of following King James to the field, obtained a company from the French monarch in the Irish Brigade, and continued to serve in that glorious band of expatriated heroes for several years, till an ardent desire to see his family and native seat once more, brought him again to Ireland. His relations, however, were all dispersed or dead, his estate forfeited to the crown by that loyalty to his sovereign which, under the new reign, was called rebellion; and marrying soon after a lady in London, with whom he

received a moderate fortune, he gave up foreign adventure and settled for the remainder of his days in his native country. From this gentleman I am lineally descended.

One brother, a sister and myself were the last living of thirteen children. We loved one another with great affection ; but as I was the youngest by ten years, their love for me had more of a parental character, while mine for them was mingled with that deep respect necessarily inspired by their more advanced age and superior attainments. They were both married, and immersed in the cares of the world, when my infant memory first began to dawn ; and at a very early period of my boyhood, I was led to think myself a person of some consequence, by having several playfellows of my own age and size, who invariably saluted me as their uncle, and treated me with all the deference due to so revered a title.

Whether this early habit of authority and protectorship had any influence in imparting

to me the steadiness and decision of character, and principle of self-reliance which have marked my subsequent career, I leave to the discussion of metaphysicians and ideologists ; sufficient for me is the conviction that, without this upholding principle, mercifully implanted in my nature, I must have sunk long since under the strange trials that have signalized my scramble through life.

At an early period of my existence, though I read with unbounded voracity such works as pleased my fancy and captivated my imagination, I held everything in the shape of a task in horror ; having a special aversion to the confinement, and, as I foolishly deemed it, the drudgery of schools. Hence I took every opportunity of playing truant, and never felt myself completely happy but when roving at liberty through the fields, by the banks of the river, over bog, heath, and mountain ; indulging in dreams and reveries without end, fighting over again the battles of the Greeks and Trojans, or dwelling with

delight on the adventures of Romulus and Remus, the fortitude of Mutius Scævola, the magnanimity of Horatius Cocles, but, above all, on the glorious self-devotion of Leonidas. With these classical reminiscences, were mixed up the mongrel compositions of a later age, such as Don Belianis of Greece, the Seven Champions of Christendom, and other specimens of what may be called mediæval fiction ; but not without some little appreciation of their respective merits, as compared with the pure and classic models.

With the exception of the injury I was unconsciously doing myself by the neglect of my school duties, these solitary rambles were of a perfectly innocent character ; for, absorbed as I was in heroic and poetical imaginings, the idea of anything in the shape of depredations on orchards or gardens never once entered my mind. On the contrary, I always left home with some creature comfort in my pocket, in the shape of a cake, or a few apples, with which I was perfectly content for the

whole day ; caring little for any other nourishment, till night brought me back, tired, hungry, and penitent, to the *casa paterna*. As Lamartine says of himself, “J’avais la fièvre perpétuelle de la liberté; j’avais le délire de la nature.” Such, indeed, was the extreme simplicity of my enjoyment, consisting in little more than the mental excitement occasioned by incessant locomotion, which is to this day a favourite luxury of mine, that the country-people looked upon me generally as a respectable and harmless sort of lunatic, and I was universally known amongst them by the title of the “fairy-hunter.”

This *soubriquet* arose, no doubt, from the partiality I always evinced for those conical, round-headed hills so numerous in many parts of Ireland, and which are commonly called Danish forts and fairy-mounts. The traditionary lore connected with these curious elevations is redolent of “Faëry,” and some of our Irish romancists have made ample

use of it. Their great attraction to me was their commanding height, their green velvet sod, and the uninterrupted day-dreams I indulged in on their lofty summits, so far removed from the small-beer doings of this work-day world.

Here, also, my schoolfellows and I had many a pleasant sham fight when, mustering in large numbers, "on a sunshine holiday," and dividing our forces into two equal bodies of Danes and Irish, under distinguished leaders, of whom I had always the honour of being one, we struggled hard in many a fierce assault for the mastery of the fairy-mount. Nor were these pastimes always of a sham description; for we not unfrequently had to do battle in good earnest with boys not belonging to our clique; who, envious of our real, or fancied superiority, often provoked us with taunts and other hostile demonstrations. We accordingly fought many a desperate action with the young ragamuffins of two notorious suburbs—one very properly called

“ Dirty Lane,” and the other the “ Spital ;” the latter of which, from the showers of stones always flying there, we christened “ The Dardanelles.”

These battles of ours were sometimes fought in the church-yard, when every tombstone became a redoubt, and the church itself a citadel ; and sometimes in the “ old gardens.” These were spacious wastes which had once been the gardens of houses and of families long since gone to decay, but which now lay either entirely open, or badly fenced against the intrusion of idlers, who resorted thither at all hours of the day, either to play pitch-and-toss, or to enjoy those gymnastic exercises, such as running, jumping, putting the stone, &c., &c., in which the Irish have been always considered to excel.

It is not, however, to be supposed that I enjoyed this truant disposition of mine with impunity. Though indulged by my father as his last and favourite child, with more than usual freedom, my frequent absence from

school was a source of great uneasiness to him; but, unwilling to punish me himself, he generally left the disagreeable task to the schoolmaster, who had frequently to send a detachment of boys in search of me, with stern directions to bring me back *vi et armis*, if necessary, to the hateful confinement and drudgery of the school-room.

This academy, to which I had been sent as a boarder, by my own desire, in preference to entering business, as my father wished, was an establishment of high repute, to which the principal gentry of the town and neighbourhood sent their sons for education. Here, though passionately fond of the literature of the ancients, which I devoured incessantly through the medium of translations, I never made much progress in their languages, having acquired from my school studies, like many other great men, "little Latin and less Greek." But what was infinitely more useful to me in after life, I became thoroughly grounded in French, and even respectably

acquainted with Spanish ; our French teacher who had been originally intended for the Catholic priesthood, having graduated at St. Omer, and also at Salamanca.

CHAPTER II.

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT.

I OFTEN look back with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret on my first false step in rejecting my father's wish that I should go into business: regret at the wanton sacrifice I made of comfort, independence, and perhaps wealth and civic honours; and pleasure at the career I thus opened for myself of strange and foreign adventure, and practical knowledge of those singular vicissitudes with which the world abounds, and of which I have had a share sufficiently ample to satisfy the most romantic imagination.

I must, however, say, in extenuation of my folly, that the scenes and recollections of my childhood were all of a martial character, calculated to unfit the mind for the ordinary routine and sober relations of life. Then our domestic traditions were all of a military cast, the decline of our family having sprung from a too heroic adherence to the fortunes of a fallen race. My father himself was an old retired officer of the army, and loved to indulge in relations of foreign adventure; especially in connection with Prince Ferdinand and the Battle of Minden, where he had been desperately wounded. His ordinary costume was somewhat allied to the Kevenhüller-hat and Ramlies-wig style of the Marlborough military dandies; while instead of an ordinary walking-stick, he generally carried over his shoulder a long, gold-headed cane, a faint vestige of the old espontoon; and when of an evening, by his own fireside, he indulged in a sober glass, and a song that smacked of the German

wars, I listened delighted to strains that fired my young blood, but of which I can now recollect nothing more than such scraps as this :

“ All hail to great Cæsar !
Long life, love, and pleasure !
May the King live for ever !
’Tis the better for us, boys !

Or else the following jovial chorus :

“ Then why should we quarrel for riches,
Or any such glittering toys ?
A light heart and a thin pair of breeches,
Will go through the world, my brave boys.”

When I add to these incentives, the absolute manner in which I was allowed to indulge in my taste for chivalrous reading, to the total exclusion of everything practically useful ; and the unrestrained freedom with which I was permitted to ramble over moor and mountain, field and meadow, absorbed in day-dreams, and thick-coming fancies ; the

reader will not be surprised that my young mind should have received a bias so decided and so durable, that, even to this hour, it imparts a tinge to the sere and yellow leaf into which my days have fallen.

But my wayward imagination was further impressed, fascinated as it were, with the daily occurrences of a pugnacious character springing from the semi-barbarous state of society which then prevailed in Ireland, and of which a mere English reader can have no adequate conception. Long before Father Matthew had ever dreamt of the modern miracle he has since accomplished, when the unlimited abuse of ardent spirits kept up to fever heat the passions of an excitable people, private feuds and quarrels were of constant recurrence ; the pistol of the gentleman and the wattle of the plebeian making frequent inroads on the peace of society, and carrying mourning and desolation into many a dwelling.

In addition to these occasional interludes,

the grand drama of factious warfare was carried on with a degree of method and martial tactics, unknown, perhaps, in any other country beneath the sun. A register, something like an adjutant's rolster, seems to have been kept by the infatuated leaders of the two great factions which divided the country for miles around ; and in this not only the numbers, names, and physical qualities of their respective adherents were carefully registered, but also the days of battle appointed for months previous, to admit of necessary preparations. During this interval, the most active partisans on both sides were in constant requisition ; beating up for recruits, lecturing on military science, inspiring the timid and exhorting the brave, to prepare for the glorious day that was to crown with triumph their respective clans ; for defeat or dishonour never seems to have formed a part of their anticipations.

During this period of combustion every description of business was, of course, sadly

neglected; irregularity and drunkenness increased, and the whole framework of society was disorganized, till, at length, the day, "big with the fate" of one or other of the contending factions arrived. This, as a matter of course, was a fair-day, when vast numbers of the peasantry arrived from all quarters, with horses, black cattle, pigs, poultry, and other country produce for the market; and at the same time, ready for all-glorious war as soon as the vulgar business of sale and purchase should be despatched.

Innumerable wounds and occasional deaths were the sad results of these ferocious battles, in the course of which deeds of individual heroism were performed that would have immortalized the actors in a worthy cause: but alas! the strength and courage that might have wrought miracles under the sacred inspiration of patriotism produced nothing in these suicidal struggles but private misery, general wretchedness, and dissolute habits, which laid a sure foundation for the

fearful ruin that has since fallen upon the unhappy land.

Breathing thus, as it were, a martial atmosphere, where every individual thought himself justified in taking the law into his own hands ; and the family idiosyncrasy being, moreover, essentially bellicose, my longing for a military life was natural enough. But the culminating point of my destiny, which gave the finishing touch to my incipient military mania, was the arrival in our town of my maternal uncle ; who, having run away from school several years before, and enlisted as a private soldier, had returned to his native place in all the seductive glory of a recruiting-sergeant.

In these degenerate days, when one hears of nothing but temperance societies and peace congresses, when the military virtues seem to be scouted, and manhood cried down, as if by general consent ; it is refreshing to cast a glance back upon those gallant fellows, whose united valour gave a splendour to the British arms

which they had never attained before, and perhaps never will again.

Mick Flaherty was one of those old war bull-dogs, who were so accustomed to sport with death, and to brave the grim tyrant to his very teeth, that enterprise and danger never came amiss to them; though their actions in civil life, were too often looked upon by the ordinary run of mankind, as the result of madness or intoxication.

On many trying occasions, Mick had displayed such admirable courage and address, that, even at the commencement of his career, he would have been elevated far beyond his humble position of a private soldier; but unfortunately he had two propensities, which always operated as a drag-chain to his ambition, and a stumbling-block to his valour. Most unfortunate men, when lamenting their evil destiny, and anathematising some besetting vice to which they attribute it, are in the habit of exclaiming, "That's the rock upon which I split!" Now my poor uncle had

two rocks to split upon, one of which was women, and the other wine: either is enough, heaven knows, to do any man's business; but Sergeant Flaherty was never thoroughly satisfied, unless he combined both, and then the consequences were what any rational man may anticipate.

In spite of all this, however, his distinguished conduct in the field was rewarded with the worsted epaulette; and as Sergeant Flaherty he was sent home to recruit, at a period when the urgency of the service called for redoubled exertion on the part of all who were interested in the glory of the British arms.

A better theatre could not possibly be chosen for the trial of my uncle's wheedling powers, than the town of Tipperary; and here on a market-day, at the head of his recruiting party, he exhibited his martial figure, and bunches of beautiful ribbons, to the admiration of rural belles, and the envy and jealousy of their beaux and spouses. All

acknowledged that he was a brave-looking man, a beautiful-elegant man, aye, and a fine-spoken man to boot, as evinced in his numerous harangues to the public; but when he entered a tavern, and invited all to partake of his hospitality, there were no bounds to rustic enthusiasm, and all joined uproariously in the burthen of his well-known song—

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT.

I.

“Come, take these ribbons, then,” said he,
“And give me no denial :
You may rise to the rank of a great grandee,
Or a prince of the blood royal ;*
And have an empress for your wife,
With a coach and six, and a very merry life !”

CHORUS.

Huzza ! huzza ! huzza !

* This is not so purely imaginative as may, at first sight, appear ; for by a recent decree of the Emperor of Austria, that soldier of fortune, Radetzky, has been (very properly, we think) created a prince of the blood.—ED.

II.

"A wooden leg, or a golden chain,
Is the maxum of the brave ;
And if you are King of France and Spain,
What more would you wish to have ?
Unless for India you'd like to pull,
And there you may be the Great Mogul !"

CHORUS.

Huzza ! huzza ! huzza !

In short, nothing could exceed the popularity of Sergeant Flaherty, especially amongst the fair sex ; and though he picked up more recruits than all his predecessors put together, he might have carried off a wife for every one of them, if the regulations had allowed him to beat up for petticoats.

It could not be expected that so fascinating a man should be free from enemies ; for as the poet truly sings, "Envy doth merit as its shade pursue," and some snarling critic is always at hand to tarnish the fairest fame. Some of this class contented themselves with shrugs and shakes of the head,

as the safest mode of expressing their sentiments and opinions: others hinted that "talk's cheap, and that 'many a bowld word comes off a weak stomach.' The sergeant, no doubt, spoke very slightly of battle, murder and sudden death, which the prayer-book taught all sober people to look upon with becoming reverence; but, for all that, when the hour of trial came, he might not be a whit better than other men who held their tongues and minded their own affairs." Of this a proof was very soon afforded.

One market-day, when the main street of Tipperary was more than usually crowded, and the recruiting party was parading up and down, with ribbons flying, and drums and fifes playing "Rory O'More," the most inspiring quick step that ever was composed; while hundreds, I may say thousands, of the admiring rabblement surrounded and accompanied their glorious march; Sergeant O'Flaherty (for he had recently tagged the great O to his otherwise vulgar patronymic)

thinking it a good opportunity to display his eloquence, gracefully waved his flashing sword, and cried out with stentorian lungs: "Recruiting party, halt!" Then, hemming significantly thrice to clear his manly voice, he was about to address the smiling multitudes of males and females who crowded around him, with his customary eloquence.

Suddenly a terrific shout arose at the top of the main street, which increased rapidly in volume, intermingled with shrieks and yells of terror; till at length the words "Mad bull! mad bull!" were distinguished in the gathering tumult. All fled in horror and confusion; men, women and children, tumbling headlong over each other, in their heedless hurry to escape the fury of the savage monster; soldiers, drummers, fifers, all, in short, fled, except the bold O'Flaherty, who, to the general amazement, stood there alone in his glory.

The bull, raging mad with the noise and confusion he himself had caused, was now

seen tearing down the street, goring some, and tossing others head over heels on the rough pavement; till the tall, motionless figure of the recruiting-sergeant met his sight glowing in all the colours of the rainbow.

With a bellow of intense and concentrated rage, he made directly at him, while hundreds of pitying voices cried out: "Run sergeant! Run for the love of God, and save yourself!"

Firm as a rock, however, stood the bold O'Flaherty, as if determined to take the bull by the horns, literally and in downright earnest; while the crowd, forgetting their own terror, gazed in stupid wonder at the inevitable destruction of their universal favourite.

My uncle, however, had witnessed a few bull-fights while he was a prisoner of war in Spain (for he was captured in Whitelock's unhappy expedition to Buenos Ayres) and had seen with delight the perfect *sang froid* with

which the *matador* awaits the onset of the savage monster, and the dexterity with which he gives him the *coup de grâce*. With equal coolness he now stood erect, alert and ready for action.

Just as the bull, with a furious bound, and a savage bellow, lowered his head to toss him in the air, O'Flaherty stepped aside; and, as the animal passed him in headlong haste, he seized him by the tail with his left hand, holding on firmly, in spite of the violent lunges of his enraged enemy; then with two rapid and well-directed blows of his sabre, he cut the tendons of both hind legs; and the ham-strung animal, in a vain attempt to rush forward, fell helpless and exhausted upon the pavement, while a shout of joy and triumph rang through the air, from the astonished and delighted multitude.

Before the close of that eventful day, fifty young fellows, in the ardour of their enthusiasm, took the King's shilling from

Sergeant O'Flaherty; and I made a secret, but a solemn vow, that I would never adopt any other profession than that of my gallant uncle.

CHAPTER III.

THE GAGE D'AMOUR.

For a long time the whole country rang with the exploit of the brave O'Flaherty: he was deified by the mob, courted by the middle-classes, and even visited by the gentry, and feasted at their houses; being himself of gentle blood, though a wild scion of an ancient race. It was actually proposed to get up a subscription to purchase him an ensigncy; but he disdained the idea of acquiring the silver epaulette through the medium of filthy lucre, exclaiming that "he'd win it on the breach, or not at all." For my part, I became wild to "follow to the field," so re-

nowned a leader ; and day and night worried my poor brains to accomplish this first, and only wish of my heart.

Fortune at length, whether for good or evil, seemed disposed to favour my juvenile aspirations ; and an opportunity was afforded me, when I least expected it, of escaping from the loathed drudgery of civil life. My brother, who was in business, and evidently on the high road to fortune, having occasion to go to London, offered to take me with him, and procure me a commission ; while I was so delighted with the idea, that I never gave my father a moment's peace till he consented to let me go, with the proviso, however, that I should limit my ambition to the militia ; and thus, as the phrase is, he abandoned the last prop of his declining age, to gratify my boyish propensity.

Behold me, then, scarcely in my fifteenth year, about to launch on the great unknown world, in a profession, the difficulties of which I had no possible means of ascertain-

ing, and whose splendour alone occupied my thoughts. Great, indeed, was the envy of my school-fellows at the fame and fortune that awaited me, in that ever-glorious career which first enlists the sympathies of the youthful heart; and greater still was their admiration at the pictures I drew from reading and imagination, alas! how unlike the reality of a soldier's life. I became to them an object of intense interest; many vowed they would embrace no other profession than the military, while several made me promise to correspond with them, and give them a regular account of all the battles, sieges, and single combats in which I might be engaged. Thrice happy age! when the banquet of life is enjoyed in advance, and the writing on the wall is lost in the splendour of imagination, and the dreams of a heated fancy!

I shall never forget the day I rode out of Tipperary on this my first start in life, at a period when other boys were immersed in

the drudgery of school, and possessing no other knowledge of the world than what I had gleaned from books of imagination; which, like the flimsy novels of our penny periodicals, contained any thing but faithful pictures of real life and manners. My brother had preceded me to Clonmel, about twenty miles distant, where he had some business to transact, and where I was to join him. For this purpose, I was mounted on a large powerful horse which, though I had frequently ridden him after the stag-hounds, was big enough for a general's charger. My holsters contained a very tidy brace of brass-barrelled pistols, the last gift of my poor father, and my clothes were packed in a large valise fixed upon the crupper; on the top of which was also strapped an old silver-hilted sword of formidable length, which had decorated my father's thigh at the battle of Minden. This deadly weapon, protruding at either end far beyond the dimensions of the valise, seemed to indicate that its

owner was a sort of person that was never to be taken alive.

Having bade my parents a last farewell, very affecting on their part, and very light-hearted on mine, I rode, thus accoutred, through the main street of Tipperary, accompanied by my most attached playfellows, to the admiration and amusement of the townsfolk. Some of these affected to be frightened at my martial aspect, some offered me friendly advice and scraps of proverbial wisdom for my future guidance, while others laughed heartily at my curious equipage, and one graceless varlet exclaimed :

“ I’ll roast on my finger all that you’ll kill in the wars.”

Too happy, however, in my own thoughts to regard their idle bantering, I proceeded onward at an easy pace, till I finally bade adieu to my school-companions, with renewed protestations and promises of mutual correspondence.

But my greatest trial was yet to come.

Amongst my young relatives, I had a little cousin, Honoria Blake, a child of extraordinary sensibility and intellect ; who, though several years younger than myself, had formed such a singular attachment to me that she could scarcely be said to exist out of my presence. She was singularly precocious, and had contracted at a very early age such a fondness for reading, that a book was in reality the only rival I had in her affections, though even that always yielded to my superior claims.

My great delight was in ministering to this early passion of my little cousin's for literature, and all my pocket-money went in purchasing food for its gratification. To this, and the facility with which I invented fairy tales for her amusement, may be attributed, I suppose, her excessive partiality for me ; but, whatever may have been the cause, the poor little soul was never happy unless walking, running, or riding her little pony by the side of her cousin Percy ; or lying in his

arms, while he recounted to her the marvellous legends of Fion McCoul, Mouldewarp, and the Headless Coach.

The trial I had now to undergo was the parting with this dear little cousin of mine. Gladly would I have avoided the scene altogether, but it was impossible to evade her vigilance. Ever since she had heard of my expected departure, she had never ceased weeping. Like Niobe, all tears, she hung upon my footsteps, followed me like my shadow, and on the morning of my departure, was up at daybreak, planted herself at her parlour window, which I must necessarily pass, and for whole hours kept watch and ward for her cousin Percy, who was going to the wars to be killed by the naughty Frenchmen.

But I must spare the gentle reader the misery I myself experienced in this harrowing interview. Poor little Honoria absolutely wept herself into convulsions, which threw us all into a terrible fright, and nothing could

pacify her but my solemn promise to return from the wars in a week, and not to allow myself to be killed by any naughty Frenchman whatever. She then clasped upon my left wrist a bracelet of her own hair, which she had woven for the occasion, our united cipher being engraved upon the gold clasp. She exacted from me a vow that this *gage d'amour* should never be lost, stolen, or given away; and, singular to relate, this gift of a child only six or seven years old, was so sacred in my eyes, that in all my vicissitudes by sea or land, it never left the spot on which she had placed it.

To the dreadful renewal of her sorrow, I at length tore myself away from my poor little cousin, and setting spurs to my horse, I galloped off to Clonmel, where my brother and I took the coach for Dublin, and proceeded to London, *vid* Holyhead, every inch of the way producing to my enraptured eyes fresh objects of wonder and delight.

Yes! let the world-weary traveller boast of

the miracles of art and nature he has seen ; let him discourse eloquently to admiring auditors of the various lands he has traversed, and the many strange sights and startling events with which his memory is fraught, I very much question if the enjoyment he finds in descanting for the hundredth time on " the Alps, the Apennines, and River Po," can at all equal the ecstasy with which the unsophisticated mind of youth sees the veil of ignorance and inexperience first rent asunder, and the world, in all its wonders, opening in endless succession to his enraptured vision.

At length we reached the " never-ending, still-beginning" metropolis ; and were hurried, as night fell, through innumerable streets, where the lights of shops and street-lamps flashed incessantly into the windows of our stage-coach ; while the interminable crowds hurrying on, as it were, for life and death, in opposing tides, and the steady and incessant roar of the " Great Babel," more than realised

the image I had formed in my own mind of Pandemonium. At length we were driven under a gloomy and narrow gateway, into a still more gloomy court-yard, when the carriage suddenly stopped, the door was opened, the step let down, and two or three smart-looking waiters, with napkins tucked under their arms, ushered us into that well-known hostelry of ancient times, "The Bull and Mouth."

After an early breakfast the following morning, I quitted this singular old dungeon of an hotel, so fearfully enveloped amidst narrow lanes and lofty buildings, that I verily believe the sun had never once fairly shone upon it, and fought my way manfully through the crowded and bustling streets to the Park. But I shall never forget the delight I experienced when the glories of the Horse Guards burst upon my view, and Life Guards and Foot Guards, in their dazzling panoply, were passing and repassing before my eyes, with all the admirable precision of military move-

ments; while the towers of Westminster Abbey rose majestically above the surrounding foliage, and the joy-bells poured forth a glorious peal in honour of Vimeira, the first of our immortal series of Peninsular triumphs.

Then, indeed, did my bosom swell with military ardour; and so unreasonable did it appear that my father should object to my choice of the army as a profession, that I actually wondered how any human being could ever think of any other. Apprehending, now, that all the battles would be won before I had time even to buckle on my armour, I urged my brother not to lose a moment in preparing me for the field; and he, smiling at my boyish enthusiasm, accordingly addressed himself to this high emprise. Nor did he experience much difficulty in the matter. Through the influence of the member for our county, who reckoned on a *quid pro quo* from my father at the next general election, I was appointed to an

ensigncy in the Hereford Militia, and lost no time, when my outfit was completed, in starting for Chelmsford, the head-quarters of the regiment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREATENING LETTER.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when I arrived at Chelmsford; and having somewhat arranged my outward man, after my journey, at the inn where the coach stopped, I inquired my way to the barracks.

On entering the gateway, the smart slap of the sentry on the butt of his musket, as he carried arms to a young officer who was entering at the same moment, attracted my attention to the latter, and I begged he would be kind enough to direct me to the quarters of Sir George Cornwall, the commanding officer. He very politely offered to conduct

me thither, and we accordingly walked across the barrack-yard, where several squads of recruits and defaulters were at drill; two or three horses in body-clothes being trotted about by a groom in livery, and some buglers and drum boys practicing the roll call and tattoo on their respective instruments.

We found Sir George amusing himself in his barrack-room with his violoncello, which he played remarkably well. He was a tall, elegant looking man, with a pleasing aristocratic countenance, but very deaf. He received me most graciously; and after chatting a few moments, consigned me to the care of my conductor, Lieutenant Richardson, to show me the lions, and assist me in my barrack arrangements.

This task Richardson undertook *con amore*, being a lively good-natured fellow in the main, with some crotchets of his own, however, which showed themselves on further acquaintance. He introduced me to the quartermaster, who immediately furnished me with a

barrack-room, and to the adjutant who supplied me with a servant. We then proceeded to the mess-room, where I was introduced to several other young fellows, with whom I lunched, and we were speedily on the best possible terms with each other. My *fidus Achates* next accompanied me into town, where he introduced me to Solomon Levi, from whom I purchased some barrack furniture; to the billiard-room, where we had a rubber or two, and to some pretty milliners with whom we flirted till the first bugle warned us to dress for dinner.

It was a day to be remembered amongst the *res gestæ* of the Blakes, when I first donned my regimentals with apple-green facings, Herefordshire being proverbially the "Land of Cider." On this great occasion, my servant Tom King, was materially assisted in his multifarious duties of valet by my friend Richardson, who really seemed to take a pride in his new protégé; for it was his great hobby to chaperon and patronize all recent arrivals,

by inducting them into all the vices and follies of military life, till he either got tired of them, or they of him. Accordingly, after some learned discussions between my two assistants, as to the exact quantity of pomatum and powder, the regulated length of my false queue, and the tying of my sash before, or behind, I was at length turned out, it was admitted on all hands, a most unexceptionable recruit.

The mess-room was crowded as we entered, with the officers of the regiment and several civilians, as guests of the day; and I was presented, in succession, to every one of any consequence, being received by all with the utmost kindness and urbanity. Our regiment was highly aristocratic: Sir George Cornwall was an old baronet; the Honourable Thomas Foley was our lieutenant-colonel, Lord Rodney captain of the light company, and his brother, the Honourable (and truly amiable) Thomas Harley, captain of grenadiers, besides several other off-shoots of noble

houses. The mess was richly furnished with plate ; we ate off china ; and champagne, at that time a luxury confined to certain classes, encouraged the " feast of reason and the flow of soul," on " stranger days " especially, such as the present ; while an excellent band alternately played opera airs and overtures, or sang madrigals, glees, and catches in full chorus for our entertainment.

Nothing could be more delightful than this my *coup d'essai* in my new career, and pleasant dreams that night, in my comfortable camp bed, seemed to augur a happy future. In the morning, Tom King lit my fire, made my breakfast, prepared my clothes for dressing, and called me just ten minutes before the first bugle had sounded for parade. Everything, in short, was done with the most perfect regularity and precision, and I had little or no occasion to exercise any thought myself ; my wants being all supplied, and my wishes anticipated as if I had been some favoured prince in fairy-land.

On parade, I underwent a more critical scrutiny, with reference, at least, to personal appearance, than on the previous evening; and I was happy to find that the tacit verdict was favourable; for, on being posted to a battalion company, Lord Rodney applied to have me in the Light Bobs, and his wishes being acceded to, I was directed to supply myself forthwith with wings and a sabre and sling belt, in lieu of the epaulette, frog belt, and straight sword with which I had joined. The good-natured reader will, I hope, excuse me for dwelling on such trifles as these; but they were my halcyon days, an *oasis* in the broad desert of my chequered existence.

I spent that evening at a barrack *soirée*, given by our major's lady; and though we were somewhat restricted for room, we were not the less happy. Several of the Chelmsford belles being amongst the company, the card-tables were voted a bore, and consigned to the passage; a carpet-dance was impro-

vised, our hostess sat down to the piano, I occasionally assisted her with the violin, while Sir Roger de Coverley and the *boulangier*, those venerable relics of the olden time, were danced with grace and spirit, in spite of the intervening obstacles of tables, chairs, sofas, and book-shelves.

This was all, in turf parlance, *going upon velvet*; but the reader is not, therefore, to infer that I met with no checks in my career, to remind me of the common lot of humanity. Though still comparatively happy, I soon began to find I was not exempt from these; for as my old favourite Hudibras so pathetically sings :

“ Ay, me ! what perils do environ
The man that meddles with cold iron !
What plaguy mischiefs and mishaps
Do dog him still with after-claps ! ”

In the first place, I was handed over to the drill-sergeant, who put me through the goose-step and firelock drill, with the most stern and unbending rigour ; and as these diabolical

evolutions were all performed in public, I had the gratification of seeing drum-boys and camp-colour men constantly sneering at my awkwardness; while occasionally a pretty girl would pass the barrack gate, when I was in the crisis of a "right-go!" in the goose-step, with one leg stuck out behind in a most ungraceful angle of incidence with the remainder of my body.

To the drill-sergeant succeeded the adjutant, with company and skeleton-drill, while the major stood by, picking holes in my jacket for losing my distance, or directing me to hold up my head and throw back my shoulders; he himself being the most clumsy and mishapen mass of flesh that could be imagined. On one occasion, this functionary hurt my *amour propre* in a manner that I can never forget or forgive.

It was our Sunday evening parade, and all the belles and beaux of Chelmsford were walking up and down the barrack-yard, listening to our beautiful band. I had, it seems, ventured to deviate from the ordinary

routine in some trifling matter of parade etiquette, when this "bustling botherby" of a major, desirous of showing the world that he had something to do for his money, rode furiously up to me, and demanded my reason for so heretical a deviation from the Law and the Prophets. I very innocently replied that I *thought* my manner of performing the duty in question was an improvement on the old method.

"You *thought*, Sir!" cried the major, foaming at the mouth. "How dare you *think*, Sir? never let me hear of your *thinking* again, Sir!"

The reader may judge of my confusion, mortification and wrath, when I saw Miss Julia Densham, a rich heiress, with whom I had lately fallen in love, show her beautiful teeth in a most unequivocal smile, which I thought anything but *comme il faut*, under the circumstances. In the agony of the moment, I made a mental vow never again to think upon any subject whatever connected

with my military duties ; and, after mature experience, I now recommend this as a very safe rule to begin with, to the junior branches of the army, especially those military tyros who are familiarly denominated "Five-and-threepenny targets."

But all these rebuffs, serious as I then thought them, were "trifles light as air" to the next "untoward event," to which I was very nearly falling a victim.

Having taken offence at my commanding officer for supplanting me, one evening, at a ball, in the honour of dancing with Miss Julia Densham, the heiress upon whom, as I before said, I had last fixed my somewhat erratic affections ; I took up my pen, determined to chastise him for his presumption, and wrote him a letter of three foolscap pages, of a most inflammatory and "aggravating" description. In this I larded the leanness of my own composition by copious quotations from Lindley Murray and

Tooke's "Pantheon;" all tending to liken him to one of those powerful and ruthless tyrants who, in the olden time, took a pleasure in baffling the wishes and blighting the happiness of sighing Strephons and of ladies fair.

The consequence of this precocious and pugnacious proceeding, was that I found myself, one fine morning, in close arrest; a sentry was placed at my door, and old Rivet, the adjutant, having marched off with my sword, soon after marched back with a list of charges to be preferred against me, as long as my arm. Sir George had doubtless laughed at my boyish folly, for I had actually only completed my fifteenth year, but thought it necessary to give me at least a salutary fright on the occasion.

In the pride of composition, and to give due force to my philippic, I had written it in a very antithetical style, which has since been adopted by the erudite author of "Lacon;" so that it was, in fact,

nothing more or less than a string of about twenty epigrams put together as chance directed.

My own style was now retorted on me; every epigram produced a separate charge, and every charge began with the awful preamble: "For conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, and highly subversive of military discipline." Every paragraph of my unfortunate epistle was ingeniously discovered to be an infraction of some specific article of war; in short, the whole mutiny-act seemed to have been devised and invented solely to preclude the possibility of my becoming commander-in-chief; or marrying an heiress.

I leave my readers to judge of the consternation I was in at the formidable array of pains and penalties I had so inadvertently incurred; for I had never anticipated a legal proceeding on the part of Sir George, who was certainly bound by all the laws of honour to settle the affair in a gentlemanly manner,

with coffee and pistols. As the case stood, however, shooting and quartering was the most merciful sentence I could possibly expect; and the idea of quitting this best of all possible worlds, when I was only, as it were, on the very threshold, put me into a most horrible fright. My hair, it is true, did not turn grey, at least perceptibly, owing to the quantity of powder I wore; but I'll venture to say that, were it not for the stringent mass of pomatum which was then *de rigueur*, it would have stood on end, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine," even to the very extremity of my false queue.

Old Rivet, the adjutant, whose heart was as hard as the nether millstone, and unfeeling as the halbert from which he had just been promoted, "grinned horribly a ghastly smile" at the impression he had made, and duly reported my fallen estate to my powerful oppressor. This fell tyrant, as I deemed him, had the cruelty to leave me in an agony of suspense for a whole week; during which

I was quizzed to death by my brother officers, and confined to my barrack-room, which seemed worse than Trenck's dungeon, or Dante's "Inferno," "where hope never comes." Talk of the Black Hole of Calcutta ! it was a breezy mountain top compared to my den ; for though door and window were thrown open, the grim aspect of the sentinel at my threshold, and the wicked leering of the drummer-boys as they passed, made my heart swell like a mountain in my breast ; till, at length, I actually felt as if the atmospheric air had been totally exhausted by an air-pump, as I had recently seen done to a poor frog in an experiment, and that the elastic fluids contained in the finer vessels of my agonised frame were every instant on the point of explosion.

When the vengeance of my ruthless foe was at length fully satiated, I was allowed to sing my *Palinodia* ; and, at a full mess-meeting, I had the gratification of swallowing my confounded epistle, paragraph by paragraph ; every

gulp being accompanied by a suitable reprimand and admonition from my triumphant rival ; who soon after, to cap the climax of my defeat, had the additional pleasure of marrying the heiress who had been the innocent cause of my disgrace.

CHAPTER V.

BARRACK SCENES,

THE sufferings occasioned by this "heavy blow and great discouragement" of my first attempt at literary composition, wrung from me, in the bitterness of my soul, a vow never to be guilty of a similar transgression; and so violent was the shock my nervous system underwent on the occasion, that for many months after, I never committed myself to paper in any more elaborate production than a guard-report, or an innocent love-letter—I say innocent—for as yet all my effusions in this way were of the high-heroic cast, and

but little calculated to do any mischief, even to the most tender-hearted innamorata.

But I shall not trouble the reader with all the absurdities I committed, before contact with the world had somewhat licked me into shape; for it was now but too apparent that I had rushed into a superior phase of existence, with all the ignorance and conceit of those precocious boys embalmed in Punch's immortal page. One practical joke, however, I must not omit, which was played off against me at this time, and which was not altogether devoid of salutary consequences.

I had taken such a disgust to my barrack-room, from my recent confinement, that I went to reside for a time in lodgings; and, as ill-luck would have it, pitched upon one not far from the barracks, which was kept by a buxom little grass widow, whose husband had recently left her, and who was, therefore, compelled, as a *pis aller*, to take in single gentlemen, and do for them.

I take heaven to witness, that my thoughts

were most particularly innocent when I entered upon the establishment of Mrs. Dawkins ; for the idea of trespassing on the domain of another, never once tarnished my imagination. My brother officers, however, who were constantly dropping in upon me, to have a chat with my hostess, either were, or affected to be, of a different opinion ; and were constantly rallying me on my good taste, on the tact with which I could choose a quarter, on the tidy manner in which my *ménage* was conducted, and a variety of other topics of a similar tendency. I must, however, admit that my little grass widow gave some colour to these insinuations, by unguardedly praising to my wild companions the gentleness of my manners, and the beautiful style in which I played the flute.

All this came in due time to the ears of our lieutenant-colonel, the Hon. Thomas Foley, who, not to speak irreverently of the aristocracy, was the most perfect devil I ever met with ; that is to say, though a high-

principled, talented, and well-educated man, he drank more wine than a dozen, without being tipsy; he was a desperate, but most honourable gambler, and he talked in his cups more horrible stuff than ever was uttered at a "boozing ken" in St. Giles'. He was, however, a general favourite, who loved to play the boy as well as any of us; and such was the singularly juvenile cast and expression of his features, that, when surrounded, as he generally was, by a host of young fellows, he might very well be taken for an overgrown junior ensign.

This eccentric scion of nobility thought it was an opportunity not to be overlooked to have a little fun at my expense; for he had taken a fancy to me, and loved to get me into scrapes, for the pleasure of getting me out of them. He led me into a duel once, and was my friend on the occasion, when my adversary and I fired seven shots each without hitting, though at ten paces. The considerate Foley then declared that enough

had been done for honour, and insisted on our shaking hands, which we accordingly did. The sagacious reader will doubtless understand that the seconds, in loading, had left out the bullets; a fact of which all parties were cognizant but myself.

In this present scheme against my happiness, Colonel Foley found a ready assistant in our paymaster, Davis, who had originally been an attorney at Leominster, and who, in the hope of one day or other representing that snug borough in parliament, was always delighted to be the agent of a little safe devilry to gratify men who had paramount interest therein. This cunning accountant prepared the scenery and machinery of the drama, and by his legal knowledge effectually completed my mystification.

Accordingly, one evening when Colonel Foley, Davis, two or three others and myself had outsat the moderates, and were just commencing on our fourth whip—by the way, it may be necessary to explain the

meaning of this term. Know then, gentle reader, that, on ordinary days when no strangers were present, and the usual mess allowance of a pint of wine each had been discussed, of which due notice was always given by signal from the vice-president, a second would perhaps be placed upon the table, and those only who chose to partake of it would remain. After this an empty wine glass was sent round, and those who wished to sit longer put in a shilling each for an additional allowance. This was called "whipping;" the mess-waiter took the money, fresh bottles were placed upon the table, and the company closed up to the president, to enjoy a still more social chat till bed-time.

This was the position in which we were on the present occasion: the generous juice had made me eloquent, and I was discoursing very largely on the ordinary topics of women, war and wine; when the mess-room door opened, and in walked two very suspicious-looking fellows, muffled up in

wrap-rascals, with each a huge bludgeon in his hand. They made directly up to me, and each tapping me on a shoulder, as if "to make assurance doubly sure," one of them, handed me a partly printed, partly written paper, and said :

"Ensign Blake, I arrests you in the king's name, and in wartue of this here latitat."

I mechanically took the paper, the awful title of which gave me a considerable shock, though I was by no means clear as to its signification. It might be a mittimus to Newgate for robbery, or a state-warrant to the Tower for high treason ; but which of these two delinquencies I had been guilty of, I could not at the moment tell : in my perplexity I kept gazing with mouth wide open on the intruders and on my brother officers alternately, but I could not utter a word to save my life.

At length Colonel Foley very kindly interfered in my behalf, and sternly rebuked the men for daring to intrude on the mess-room of his Majesty's troops : but they very

stiffly said they knew what they were about ; they had the law on their side, and they never cared nothing, not they, for nobody's big looks.

"Let us hear then, what it's all about," said the colonel.

"Had you not better read the latitat?" suggested Davis.

"Good gracious !" said the colonel, perusing it, and mumbling to himself, "distrain ye the goods and chattels—criminal conversation—Dorothy Dawkins, &c., &c., that is altogether beyond my interference. I was in hopes it was only a simple caption for a paltry debt or so, instead of an action by Jeremiah Dawkins."

"Very serious, Sir," said Davis, shaking his head and sipping his wine. "*Banco regis*, a very serious matter indeed."

"Unlawful communication," said the colonel, "with a *femme couverte*."

"Destitution of marital rights and comforts," chimed in Davis.

"Damages laid at five thousand pounds !" said the colonel.

"But my dear colonel," I at length gasped out, "my dear Davis, I know no more about Dorothy Dawkins than you do."

"Pray, Sir," said the colonel, drawing himself up with great hauteur; "don't attempt to implicate me in so disgraceful a transaction."

"For my part," said Davis, "I wash my hands of the shocking affair altogether."

"My dear Richardson, my dear Jenkins," I said, appealing to the others.

"It's a very ugly business," said Richardson; "that I must say, though you are my friend."

"Hang me," said Jenkins, "if I'd stand in your shoes for a trifle."

"My good fellows," I exclaimed turning round to the bailiffs, "I'm perfectly innocent, 'pon my honour."

"Gammon!" said one, putting his tongue in his cheek.

"You look like it," said the other, with a diabolical leer.

"I take heaven to witness," I exclaimed,

casting up my hands and eyes devoutly to the ceiling, that Dorothy Dawkins may be a Vestal-virgin for anything I know to the contrary."

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried some. "Shame! shame!" cried others.

"But where on earth," I exclaimed, with a look of profound despair, "where am I to get five thousand pounds?"

"There's the Kilkenny estate, you know," said the colonel, "of which you talked so much this evening."

"'Tis gone long ago," I replied, "with that humbugging James the Second."

"And that beautiful piece of bog land on *Slieve na Muck*," observed Davis.

"It's mortgaged," I said, "for more than it's worth."

"Come, come," said the principal bailiff, "we can't wait here no longer, not for nobody. So put on your hat, and go along with us; we have a po-chay at the door, quite handy."

"But my good fellows, I'm innocent," I exclaimed.

"You can tell that to the judges, or the marines, if you like," said the tipstaff, "but in the meanwhile you must go to quod."

I threw another imploring glance upon the colonel, upon Davis, upon Richardson, upon Jenkins; but they all sat like so many statues, with their eyes fixed upon the ceiling, and I saw that the case was hopeless.

"Confound the fellow!" I said, "why doesn't Jeremiah Dawkins call me out, and vindicate his injured honour, like a man?"

"There, gentlemen," said the bailiff, "I call you all to witness he has confessed his guilt."

"I have done no such thing," I cried.

"Yes you did," said the bailiff's assistant; "you said as how you injured the poor man's honour."

"Oh! oh! shame! shame!" exclaimed my brother officers *una voce*.

"I said nothing of the kind," I cried,

tears of shame and indignation starting from my eyes ; " but if he fancies I have injured his honour, I'll give him satisfaction this instant ; and I'll give him three shots to one, rather than go to your infernal *banco regis*."

" We have nothing to do with that ;" said the bailiff doggedly. " Our orders is to seize your corpus, and go with us you must."

With a heavy heart, I accordingly prepared to accompany the myrmidons of the law ; and we had actually reached the door, when the colonel called out in a voice evidently stifled with deep emotion :

" Stop for a moment."

The bailiffs accordingly stopped, and came to where the colonel was sitting.

" After all," said Foley, when he had somewhat recovered himself, " this is aailable offence, even supposing it to have been committed."

" It never was committed, my dear colonel,"

I exclaimed ; " I pledge you my word of honour."

" Pray," resumed the colonel, " what amount of security do you require for Mr. Blake's appearance, when called upon to answer the charge in the Court of King's Bench ?"

" We cannot take a farthing less, your worship," said the bailiff, " than the full amount of the damages laid."

" 'Tis a heavy sum to be bound in," said the colonel, with a deep sigh ; " but rather than see my friend in jail, I'll risk it, though 'tis every fraction of ready I have in the world."

I threw myself into the arms of the generous Foley, and vowed eternal gratitude for his goodness.

" Davis," said the colonel, " be good enough to go and draw up the bail bonds, and I'll sign them at once, before the affair gets wind."

The paymaster accordingly withdrew with

his worthy instruments, and, to my great comfort, I saw no more of them. I sat down, of course, to another bottle with my generous deliverer; to whom, in the overflowings of my heart, I made an ample confession of all my peccadilloes.

I was assisted home about the small hours by Tom King, who put me to bed; and the next morning I awoke with a splitting headache, and a misty consciousness of something like a frightful night-mare.

CHAPTER VI.

NORMAN CROSS.

IN a few days the roguery oozed out ; and as Dr. Prolix would say, it caused a great laugh at the time. I had my revenge, however, at a subsequent period, at least on the paymaster, for his accomplice was too good a fellow to bear malice against ; but for a long time after I was never called anything but Dorothy Dawkins.

This custom of giving nick-names, by the bye, prevailed very much amongst us young fellows at that time, as indeed it may to this day for anything I know to the

contrary. One of my brother subalterns, who walked in a strange sidelong manner, we always called Right-shoulders-forward; another who, with his hands in his pockets, made an incessant jerking motion with his elbows, we called Shuffle-the-wind: a third, a tall, lanky fellow, with a receding forehead and a wide mouth always open, and uttering turkey-like sounds, we called Hobble-gobbleum; and a fourth, who was certainly more like a pioneer than a gentleman, we nicknamed Shoulder-your-shovel. Our quarter-master was a remarkably stiff skeleton figure, and had several deep blue marks on his face, from the explosion of a cartridge when he was in the ranks: we called him Starch-and-blue; and the *sobriquet* derived considerable piquancy from the fact that his wife had been a washerwoman; while our adjutant never went by any other name than that of Mind-to-move-forward! this being the very mystical caution with which he invariably prefaced the word "march!" We were so much in

the habit of calling our drill-sergeant Marshal Saxe, that it rather mystified a young fellow who had recently joined, and who, in all seriousness begged the colonel one day on parade, to exempt him from further drill, as he had been told he was quite perfect.

"Who told you so?" asked the colonel, incredulously.

"Marshal Saxe, Sir," replied Johnny Newcome, amidst a general roar of laughter.

But these are boyish recollections unworthy of this scientific and utilitarian age; when the youth of Great Britain, though still in their teens, are deep in the mysteries of steamships, rail-roads and money questions; working to a thread-paper their organ of acquisitiveness, and deigning to converse, in their convivial moments, about nothing but nuggets, cast iron, and gold dust. Yes, boyish recollections they doubtless are; but I can never forget that they refer to those beardless youths who smote the hairy warriors of Gaul, and broke their golden idol with the feet of clay

—those laughing, tender offspring of fond mothers, who bore with unflinching spirit the march, the bivouac, and the battle-field; and whose blood, freely and fearlessly shed on many a distant soil, has preserved to “merrie England” her happy homes and altars free, her maids and matrons unscared by the rude glance of foreign soldiery, and her countless treasures safe from the greedy grasp of continental despots.

The first few months of my noviciate passed thus pleasantly at Chelmsford, in the performance of easy duties, and the society of my brother officers, and the wives of the few who were married; for we had but little intercourse with the surrounding gentry, who, generally speaking, kept aloof from us birds of passage with the cold formality peculiar to the English character. This was a circumstance that struck me with amazement, accustomed as I had been from my earliest years to see the military courted and caressed in my own country, and treated with that unbounded

hospitality for which it was so remarkable in its days of comparative prosperity ; for there, alas ! prosperity is a comparative, not a positive good.

Much of this precious period was, I shame to confess it, squandered in idle pleasures and trivial amusements ; but our youth is spent in killing time, and our age in repenting of the murder. Amongst these, the billiard-room had its usual attractions ; and there I was fleeced by my friend Richardson and others, till at length I myself became an adept, and might have fleeced tyros in turn, which I am happy to say I never did. I loved the game for its own sake, as one essentially military in its character, being highly suggestive of thought, combination and enterprise ; but when it was debased to a mere money-grubbing speculation, it lost its noble impulse, in my eyes, and its fascination greatly diminished, though it still made deep inroads on my time.

Fortunately, however, from my earliest

recollection I have been under the influence of three great passions, or hobbies, call them which you will, viz., books, music, and painting ; and I cannot recommend to young military men three safer, or more agreeable companions. My absolute devotion to these amusements, for I dare not call them studies, saved me from becoming a mere vapid idler ; and I can safely say that the long hours I passed in my own barrack-room during the winter evenings, when others were at the bottle, or the billiard-room, were, at once, the most delightful and instructive of my otherwise monotonous existence. At first, I was somewhat quizzed and laughed at by my young companions, for this solitary indulgence in what they called gammon ; but in time I came to be considered a clever sort of fellow, being smart at repartee, fearless in expressing my opinions, and an especial good scribe at a court-martial. I soon became very expert in this way, principally from the idleness of my fellow members, who were always glad

to give me a monopoly of this "horrid bore."

By the time I was dismissed from drill, and declared by Marshal Saxe to be a very creditable specimen of a Light Bob, we got the route for Norman Cross. This being a new phase in my existence, I was all in a bustle to prepare for the march ; packing and unpacking my trunks, so that, on a sudden emergency, they might not resemble the midshipman's chest where everything was uppermost, and nothing at hand ; and arranging my canteen so as to make the greatest quantity of breakfast and tea-equipage fit into the smallest possible compass. Then I had to get a box made for my camp-bed and bedding ; and to have it painted of a deep slate colour, with my name, rank and regiment at full length in large white letters on the top. Then I bought a hollow boot-tree, in whose capacious womb my boot-jack, brushes and blacking were compactly stowed ; while for my pistols and gun-case, I had strong canvass covers manufactured,

and painted the exact ditto of my bed-box. In all these matters, which served me for a sort of jubilee, I was eminently assisted by my valet in ordinary, Tom King, who was a most handy, experienced and obliging fellow ; though he did possess one or two unpleasant peculiarities, of which hereafter.

But the most disagreeable part of all this was the delivering over of my barrack-room ; a ceremony very repugnant to my rooted prejudice against every thing that had an air of business, but which I was recommended by some of the old hands to superintend myself, and I soon found out the reason why.

The evening before we marched, in walked the barrack-master sergeant, with an ominous aspect, and note-book and pencil in hand, to take an inventory of breakages, deficiencies and holes in the wall. He was accompanied by our quarter-master sergeant, who might be looked upon as plenipotentiary for my behoof ; though I thought I detected something like

collusion and undue fellow-feeling in the course of the proceedings.

These two high functionaries having first taken a general survey of my establishment which was, I confess, in an awful state of confusion, looked at each other with a furtive smile, and then proceeded to note down the discrepancies in detail.

"This coal-box," said the barrack-sergeant, "is broken all to smash, with something like shot holes."

"Yes," I said, "last rainy day we set it up as a target for a pistol match. 'Twasn't bad practice, as you see; I hit the bull's eye five times running."

"One, two, five, seven, eleven, fifteen, five and twenty," said the honest sergeant as he counted, "it must have a new bottom altogether."

"Very well," I said, "put that down to me, and go on."

"This table is all rickety," said the

sergeant, "and two of the chairs have only three legs between them."

"Well," I said, "charge me with the repairs, for they're very useful in our gymnastics: but make haste, for there goes the first dinner bugle."

This injunction, I thought, had an opposite effect; for the barrack-sergeant began very deliberately to count the holes in the wall where I had nailed up pictures of all sorts and sizes, changing their position every now and then as whim or fancy dictated.

"As I am a living man," said the sergeant, with a deep inspiration, "there are one hundred and fifty nail-holes in this wall alone."

"Well," I said, "clap 'em all down, and don't bother me any more about them."

"And on the opposite wall," said the sergeant, "are three large frisky paintings, red, yellow, green and black."

"Those fresco paintings," I said, "as you are pleased to call them, I leave there for

the amusement and instruction of the next comer."

"'Twill cost me three shillings in yellow oker and whitewash," said the sergeant, "to rub them all out."

This was the cavalier manner in which the Vandal treated my artistic lucubrations; which, though very tolerable landscapes, were not, I confess, anything to be compared to some beautiful chalk drawings I often subsequently admired in a barrack-room at Ipswich; the production of Sir Robert Kerr Porter, when a captain in the Leicester militia, and which were allowed to remain on the walls as fine specimens of his genius.

"Now, here are three panes of glass cracked," said the sergeant, "and one out altogether."

"I flung my boot through that an hour ago," I said, "at Hobble-Gobbleum, for making faces at me."

"Then," said the sergeant, "the poker is bent like the letter S; the tongs are minus

one leg ; the fender is crushed down as flat as a pancake, and the bellows has lost its nozzle, and has fifty air-holes in it besides."

It was, in fact, a wheezy and asthmatical old concern, that gave out wind everywhere but where it was wanted.

" And I'm dashed !" said the sergeant with a fearful oath, " if this fire-shovel isn't burnt down to the size of a mustard spoon. All along, I dare to say, of melting lead to cast bullets with."

" Well," I replied, "'twas the handiest thing I could find for the purpose."

" And somebody," continued the sergeant, " has been boring a lot of holes in the floor, making ghosts, I suppose, with the red-hot poker."

At this moment the second bugle sounded for dinner: snatching up my forage cap, for I had some friends at the mess, I ran off, leaving the two sergeants alone in their glory ; and under their considerate management my barrack damages cost me *only* fifty shillings !

N'importe ! We're on the road, and hey for change and variety, new scenes, new faces, and fresh adventures ; all so delightful to unreflecting youth—yea, and to sober age also, as I myself can testify in this my grand climacteric, when the tap of the drum, or the merry bugle note, echoing through the woodland, sends the blood in a tumultuous current back to my heart, and I long for the times of old—"the deeds of the days of other years !"

Of all parties of pleasure, give me a march in happy England ; not, as it is now too often performed, on the abominable railway, but along the smooth carriage roads of ancient times ; with their toll-bars, their smiling cottages, their way-side inns enveloped in vines, their honeysuckle hedges, their bordering meadows and overhanging elms and beeches ; amidst which the soldiers tramp along at a steady pace in column of subdivisions, singing their quaint songs, or laughing with reckless glee at some biting

jest or merry story ; their officers jogging on beside them in little groups, indulging in friendly chat, or flirting with the rosy-cheeked maidens, whose road may happen to lie in the same direction ; while, ever and anon, entering some village or rural town, the ranks close up, stragglers hasten to join their companies, the officers resume their places, arms are sloped, and the band in front striking up some merry quick-step, fatigue and sore feet are forgotten, and every man is a hero, at least in his own unprejudiced mind.

Our marches, which rarely exceeded twenty miles a day, were generally completed before breakfast ; though we sometimes breakfasted at some rural hostelry, which was in itself a source of no small amusement, from the bustle and confusion into which all were thrown to provide for so large a party. The remainder of the day we had for rest and amusement ; and our excellent mess being established at the principal hotel of our halt, we spent our evenings like

gentlemen who devoted their hearts to the fair, and their lives to their king and country. In this manner, we were not long in reaching Norman Cross, that once-celebrated military station, whose extensive site is now, doubtless, crowned with waving fields of corn, or bristly stubble, as the season may happen to be; though it was then a cantonment occupied by twelve thousand beings full of life, high hope, and unconquerable spirit.

Of these, upwards of eight thousand were French prisoners, of all ranks, naval and military, horse, foot, and artillery: the rest were their guards; consisting of five or six splendid regiments of militia, of which mine was by no means the least conspicuous, for its numerical strength and superior discipline.

This celebrated station covered many acres of ground, the inner portion of which, constituting the prison, was divided into four quadrangles; these were surrounded by high palisades, placed one foot apart, and were separated from each other by broad avenues;

the whole being commanded by a lofty wooden building, mounting a dozen four-pounder swivel guns, which was called the block-house, and was situated in the centre, at the intersection of the avenues. The barracks of the garrison formed external quadrangles of vast extent, palisaded also towards the country. They comprised quarters for four thousand men, with large barrack-yards, stables, cooking-houses, and other out-offices ; the whole establishment being built of wood, tarred and painted, and looking compact and comfortable.

Each of the inner quadrangles was so extensive as to permit the prisoners to amuse themselves by walking, jumping, fencing, and other healthful exercises, during the day ; and at night they were all locked up in lofty and well ventilated apartments, where the only inconvenience they experienced was want of room. From the great increase in their numbers latterly, this inconvenience at length amounted to a positive evil. Their

mattresses were laid upon the floor, and when they retired to rest, they were jammed so close together that no individual person could turn from one side to the other, without the concurrence of the whole.

To remedy so great an evil, these ingenious fellows entered into a treaty offensive and defensive ; by virtue of which a timesman was appointed by general consent, whose duty it was when they had lain for a certain period on one side, to cry out with a loud voice "*Tournez !*" on which the whole company by a simultaneous movement, was to make an immediate change of position. This was certainly not very pleasant during the heat of the weather, and it was particularly irksome to those who did not awake at the critical moment of turning : but custom soon reconciled them to it ; and they at length became so expert, that frequently the word of command was given, and the change of position made, without a single individual being disturbed from his slumbers by the operation.

With the exception of being thus packed up as close as sprats in a barrel, our prisoners were comfortable enough at Norman Cross ; and instead of fretting themselves to fiddle-strings by reflecting on their helpless condition, and vainly attempting to escape, as is the case with Englishmen similarly situated, they endeavoured to banish care by employment. Some of them taught French, dancing and fencing, while others manufactured a variety of toys from the bones of their meat, and the straw of their mattresses, which were eagerly purchased by the visitors of the prison. These were numerous, and comprised all the gentle and simple inhabitants of the country round ; the officers of the garrison and their wives and daughters, together with casual travellers, whose curiosity led them to view a place of such celebrity.

With all these, the prisoners held constant communication, between the palisades of their respective quadrangles ; whither fond mothers went to purchase a spinning-jenny, or a rattle

for their noisy darlings ; doting fathers to buy an ivory guillotine, or ship model for their hopeful heirs ; country Strephons to present their rural belles with a *gage d'amour*, a needle-case in the shape of Cupid's quiver, or a work-box of sandal-wood beautifully ornamented in classical designs with painted straw and bits of looking-glass ; while curious travellers flocked thither to pick up a memorial of the strange sights they had seen. All the world, in short, went to see the French prisoners, to profit by their instruction, or to avail themselves of their ingenuity ; and, at the time we arrived there, Norman Cross presented less the appearance of a prison than a fair.

Amongst others, I availed myself of the opportunity to renew my French studies, which I prosecuted with much success. I also became a good fencer, and made considerable progress in Spanish, many of the prisoners having served in the first army of occupation sent by Napoleon to the Peninsula.

But that which I found of most essential service to me at a subsequent period was Freemasonry, into the sovereign mysteries of which I was duly inducted in an excellent Lodge held in the garrison. I am somewhat particular in noticing all these points, which I strongly recommend to the consideration and adoption of such aspiring young heroes as may honour this book with a perusal.

At Norman Cross we were close to that great hunting country Leicestershire; and but a few miles from Whittlesea Mere, whose sedgy surface I have often ploughed with adventurous punt, while shooting ducks and widgeons. At Peterborough, we enjoyed all the amusements of that pretty little city, and danced and flirted with its lovely fair ones; while, within one mile of our barracks lay the village of Stilton, world-renowned for its cheeses; though none of that excellentedible is therein manufactured, being entirely the produce of the neighbouring county of Leicester. Stilton still occupies a verdant spot in

my memory's waste, as there for the first time I fell seriously, deeply and irrevocably in love. But this important epoch of my chequered life is worthy of another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRENCH PRISONER.

This world, after all, is a mere phantasmagoria ; or, as Lord Denman said of something else, "a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." When you fancy you are standing upon firm ground, and have all your earthly wishes within your grasp, the quicksand upon which you build your "airy nothings" slides from under your feet, and you are engulfed in a maelstrom of blighted hopes, ardent longings and anticipated joys.

When, or how it was that I first became acquainted with Harriet Sibley I now forget,

but she soon became the ruling star of my destiny. She was serious, romantic, and of a high heroic cast of thought ; being thus, as it were, a counterpart of myself. Her beauty was not brilliant, but her features were pleasing and expressive, and her figure symmetry itself. Her sister Jane, on the contrary, was very handsome, a pure *blonde*, and gay and lively as the lark while it soars aloft and “ at heaven’s gate sings ” amidst ethereal sunshine.

These two fair sisters used frequently to walk up to Norman Cross, which was situated on a considerable elevation above the village of Stilton, where they dwelt with their widowed mother ; and thus I had opportunities enough to advance my suit, which I did with all the ardour of a boy of sixteen, but without any of the dexterity that most speedily wins the favour of the fair. I was, however, the chosen beau and *preux chevalier* of *la belle Harriette*, as she was denominated by the French prisoners ; and though many of

my brother officers tried to cut me out, by all those means which are proverbially fair in love and war, she still manifested a decided preference for me, which was repaid on my part by the most delicate attentions and devoted attachment; but I never once ventured to ask either her or myself how it was all to terminate.

I remarked that in their progress with other company through the avenues of the prison, these dear sisters generally stopt for some time at one particular stall; for the prisoners were permitted to fix up narrow boards, or counters, on the outside of their palings, upon which they exposed their toys of bone and straw for sale. This I at first imagined was for the purpose of making purchases; but I soon found there was something else on the *tapis*, and that a certain young Frenchman always gave them the rendezvous at that identical spot, though apparently, poor fellow, he had nothing either to buy or sell.

He was a handsome, soldier-like fellow, with a very threadbare frock coat, a smart moustache, and a gold-laced forage cap, stuck with a jaunty air on the side of his head. He spoke English with fluency, and was evidently altogether a person of superior rank to those around him. In fact, I became jealous of this Frenchman ; and for the first time in my life I felt those pangs of the green-eyed monster which have never been so truly and so fearfully depicted as by the poet of all times and nations.

My feelings soon became too powerful for restraint ; they were speedily perceived by Harriet, and were as speedily allayed by that delightful tact which is peculiar to the sex. By a fascinating freedom of tone and manner in the presence of my fancied rival she, in a moment, dispelled my fears ; and taking my arm, the first time she had condescended to so much familiarity, she walked up and down the avenue with me, while I could perceive her sister and Adolphe Berton, for so the

Frenchman was called, in animated and delighted conversation, *tête-a-tête*.

Thenceforward I became more reconciled to and more intimate with the poor prisoner, who had lost his liberty at the battle of Vimiera, and was now pining his soul away for the field of honor and the clash of arms. One only source of comfort, if not of happiness, he possessed in the love of Jane Sibley, which he repaid with interest; not only as a means of present enjoyment, but as the instrument of some ulterior advantage which he doubtless had in contemplation.

Time now flew with me on eagle's pinions, for I was perfectly happy and free from care. My regimental and garrison duties were performed with zeal and assiduity; I was high in estimation with the heads of the regiment, and a favourite with my brother officers generally: nay, I began to be talked of in the garrison as a first-rate billiard and racket player, a linguist, a good fencer, a crack-shot, and a dashing horseman; for though I kept

no cattle of my own, I hunted frequently in Leicestershire with Colonel Foley and Lord Rodney, and always rode their matches at the Stamford races, where "Percy Blake" soon became a "Household Word." Add to this, there were few men in the garrison who could out-walk, out-run, or out-jump me ; and though my figure was slight and wiry, I could pitch a light or a heavy stone with any grenadier in the regiment, this being one item in that system of specious idleness, the besetting sin of the youth of Ireland. Then again, I was the envy of my brother subs for being *all on velvet*, as they termed it, with *la belle Harriette* ; and though my old tormentor Davis now and then reminded me that I was on the debit side of his ledger, an occasional remittance from my brother always enabled me to book up in time to save my credit, as a guarantee for a future advance.

But still there was some little hitch in my happiness that, like the ruthless gnaw in the liver of an old Indian, I could not get over ;

for it had been insinuated to me by some good-natured friend, who was jealous of my good fortune, that there was actually some sort of engagement between Harriet and a cousin of hers at Stamford ; a rich farmer and manufacturer of the real, ripe and palmy Stilton. It is true, he was represented to me as very plain, round and squat, like his own cheeses, with a huge shock head of red hair, large green spectacles, and otherwise a guy ; but the intelligence made me so uneasy that I actually questioned Jane on the subject of this reputed engagement.

“ Well,” she replied, “there is, or was something in the matter ; for mamma was very anxious about it, my cousin being very wealthy, and having quite a splendid establishment.”

“And does he presume to aspire to Harriet?” I demanded.

“ Oh, most ardently,” she replied with a smile ; “ even though he has heard of a certain Hotspur from the sister island.”

“And how does Harriet receive his addresses?” I asked.

“She doesn’t care about him,” said Jane naïvely, “especially since—ahem—but you needn’t trouble yourself about him.”

“Especially since when?” I eagerly demanded.

“I’ll tell you another time,” she replied in some confusion, “but there’s mamma calling me in the garden.” And off she ran.

“Especially since—!” Oh! that excruciating hiatus, which left me suspended between the heaven of hope and the gulf of despair. There was, however, something encouraging in the half confidence with which I had been favoured, and I mustered impudence enough, when I met Harriet, to utter some stupid witticisms about Wigsbys, milk-pans, cheese vats, &c.; which made her look excessively grave, and put a sudden stop to our conversation.

For three or four days after this, I could not get even a glimpse of my divinity, till at last I

began to think I had given her mortal offence, and was revolving in my own mind whether I should shoot myself or Wigsby, when a little urchin from Stilton put a note into my hand, and walked off without waiting for an answer.

I opened the missive, and found, to my great delight, that it was from Harriet, asking me to meet her that evening at a well-known stile, midway between the village and the Cross.

True to the touch, I was there at the appointed hour, and had not long to wait for my belle. She was accompanied by a little brother and a huge Newfoundland dog, and held out her hand to me as she approached; her charming face all radiant with mantling smiles. We took a few turns across the fields, and after mutual explanations and concessions on my part, were once more happy in each other's society.

"By the bye," she said, at parting, "I have a small favour to ask of you."

"To command you mean, my dear Harriet,"

I exclaimed with energy. "Am I not your knight, bound to obey your behest at peril of life and limb?"

"Nay, nay," she hastily replied; "I would not put you in peril for the world;" and she laid her hand upon mine with a gentle pressure, smiling in my face as only a fond woman knows how.

"Well, then," I said, as I conveyed her hand to my lips, "tell me at once what I can do for you."

"'Tis merely," she replied, rather hesitating, "to procure me the countersign for to-morrow night."

"Oh!" I cried laughing, "is that your mighty request? I confess you mortify me most exceedingly."

"Nay," she said, "if it be inconvenient——"

"Not in the least, dearest," I replied. "You shall have it to-morrow afternoon, the moment I receive it myself." And we parted.

It may, perhaps, be known to the reader

that, in garrison towns during the war, and especially at a place of so much consequence as Norman Cross, all persons approaching the post of a sentinel at night are challenged to give the countersign, in default of which they are arrested till they can satisfactorily account for themselves. At the Cross, where a tenfold vigilance was necessary, the countersign for the night was not issued by General Williams, the Commandant, till late in the afternoon ; and then it was communicated to the officers of the garrison through their respective commanding officers, in a little note sent to the mess-room. At a convenient moment, when this note had been seen by a sufficient number to give it circulation, I seized it, galloped down to Stilton, put the magic scroll into the fair hand of my Harriet, and was amply repaid by a profusion of thanks, and a shower of ethereal smiles.

It was stranger-night, and I sat late at the mess, making arrangements for joining Sir Gilbert Heathcote's hounds the following

day with Colonel Foley, and dining with "The Hunt" after. When at last I sallied forth to go to my own quarters, I found it was blowing a gale of wind, and the old wooden buildings were creaking in the blast. It was, however, a fine clear night otherwise ; the moon was struggling through a mass of clouds that seemed shattered by the tempest, and lit up the surrounding objects with fitful gleams that vanished as suddenly in the deepest gloom. Now I dearly love this warring of the elements, when the atmosphere is free from rain, while the blustering wind braces the relaxed frame, and stimulates the blood to redoubled action ; therefore wrapping my cloak around me, and strapping my forage-cap under my chin, I determined to take a stroll to cool me a little after a more than usual devotion to the rosy god.

As I sauntered on, not knowing whither to direct my steps, my ear was saluted by the deep challenge of a sentry.

"Who goes there?"

"Friend!" I replied.

"Advance, friend," said the sentry, "and give the countersign."

I advanced close up to the sentry, and whispering the countersign in his ear, walked on.

"Pass, friend!" cried the sentry, "and all's well!"

This little scene reminded me of Harriet; and insensibly I strolled down the road to Stilton; cogitating, as I breasted the gale, on the pleasant posture of my affairs, and comparing every sudden puff that assailed me to some rude shock of fortune which it was my duty and my pride to conquer. By the time I had got to the end of a long imaginary concatenation of fortuitous events, I passed close in front of my charmer's residence, which was only separated from the road by an ornamental railing, and a narrow slip of flower garden.

It was very late, but I could perceive

through a chink in the shutters, a light in the parlour ; and wondering what could keep them up at such an unseasonable hour, I stopped for a moment. To my astonishment, I heard a man's voice within ; and, instantly, the demon of jealousy seized upon my soul, for I could not suppose it to be any other than my rival, Wigsby.

Warmed with wine, and excited by exercise, I felt my passion mastering my reason, and I determined to be satisfied, on the instant, about this mysterious affair. I accordingly rushed up to the door, and gave a loud single knock, that I might not put them on their guard, and enable Wigsby to escape. I had to repeat it, however, before it was answered ; and, when the servant girl saw who stood before her, she gave a squeak, threw the door in my face, and bolted off into the parlour. I instantly followed ; and, before she had time to fasten the door, I was in the apartment, and found myself face to face with *la belle Harriette* and that detestable Wigsby !

I had never seen the fellow before, but there could be no mistake in the matter, for there was the punchy figure, with the large green spectacles, and the horrid shock head of red hair. They had been indulging, forsooth, in a *tête-à-tête*, Miss Harriet being determined to have two strings to her bow ; but, though so palpably caught in *flagrant delit*, they stood calm and collected before me.

"So, madam !" I exclaimed, as well as passion would permit my utterance, "I have at length discovered your treachery and falsehood."

"Pray, sir," said Harriet, with the most dignified hauteur, "how dare you presume to enter this house at such an hour, and with so little ceremony?"

Her effrontery, I confess, somewhat abashed me ; but, sustained by my passion, I replied :

"It was Providence that directed me hither, to save me from misfortune and disgrace."

"And now that you have attained your object," retorted Harriet, while fire flashed

from her eyes, "be good enough to retire ; for I have never given, and never shall give you, any right whatever to dictate to me what company I shall keep."

"Then, farewell," I cried, "for ever ; false, perjured woman, since you have got one that is evidently nearer and dearer to you than I am."

"He is," she replied, with a faint, ambiguous smile, "justly dear ; and, I hope, will soon be nearer to me than he is at present."

"Harriet !" I cried, while tears of agony gushed from my eyes, "you have embittered my existence ; but I forgive, and hope I shall soon forget you. As for this cheese-making snob, I have all the mind in the world to shake him out of his shoes."

Here I put my hand on Wigsby's breast, to show how easily I could carry my threat into execution ; but he grappled with me in turn, and no longer master of myself, I shook him till his red wig and green spectacles fell off, and Adolphe Berton stood before me,

while Harriet's shrieks brought in her mother and sister. The latter exclaiming, "all is lost and ruined!" fainted in the arms of her lover.

For my part, I felt as if the crash of thunder that was pealing outside had fallen upon my devoted head; and I stood amidst the ruin I had caused in mute astonishment. At length, Jane, having recovered from her swoon, threw herself at my feet, and implored my pity for her hapless lover, and her still more unhappy self. Her mother knelt by her side; and finally Harriet, sinking on her knees, took my hand, and bedewed it with her eloquent tears.

I could hold out no longer: I grasped the hand of the young Frenchman, who had hitherto stood aloof in proud defiance, and said:

"Berton, my duty forbids me to assist you to escape, but I never, never will betray you."

"Generous enemy!" cried Berton, warmly pressing my hands in his, "I thought you

had a noble heart. I now only hope that fortune may one day put it in my power to requite you for this, and I swear to heaven that I will not let the opportunity slip."

Fortune did put it in his power at a subsequent period in the Peninsula, and he nobly redeemed his pledge.

We all sat down now, to calm our agitated spirits, and wait the arrival of the mail which was to bear Adolphe to London, where he hoped to conceal himself till an opportunity offered for returning to the continent. Meanwhile I was let into the secret of his escape.

When his fellow-prisoners were locked up for the night, he had contrived, to evade the vigilance of the turnkey, who, as it very often happened, was somewhat fuddled; and he remained outside in the quadrangle, concealing himself, and awaiting a favourable moment to proceed. Another piece of good fortune was the sudden tempest that came on; for amidst the hurly-burly of the elements, he sawed through one of the palings without being

heard by any of the sentries. He was now in the main central avenue of the prison, but still he had many barriers, gateways, and lines of sentinels to pass. Being furnished, however, through my unconscious means, with the countersign, he boldly proceeded, and passed all impediments without exciting the least suspicion. He then hurried down to the house of his mistress, which he entered in the disguise of her cousin, in order to baffle the surmises of all who might see him; and so well had he assumed the semblance of that monster, that the servant girl herself was imposed upon: hence her confusion, and the squeak she gave on seeing me; expecting a disturbance, of course, when I should surprise Miss Harriet with her country beau.

The mail at length arrived; Berton departed for London, and I bade adieu to my sweet mistress, who said to me archly, as she pressed my hand:

“I hope you are now effectually cured of the ‘green-eyed monster?’”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES.

WAKING happiness does not always produce pleasant dreams, otherwise mine that night would have been redolent of bliss ; for I was conscious I had done a generous action, by which two deserving individuals were saved from misery, and I had a firm conviction in the attachment of my mistress. Still, however, the spirit, as if prescient of evil, struggled under its mystic conjunction with matter, and the result was nightmare and all the hag's attendant horrors.

In the morning, I was roused from a deep

slumber by the voice of Richardson, who rushing into my room, cried out in joyous accents :

“ Well, Percy my boy, you’re in for a row at last, when you least expect it.”

“ Good heavens !” I exclaimed, starting out of my bed, “ what is the matter ?”

“ Don’t be frightened,” he replied, laughing at my agitation. “ It’s only a small matter of fighting, which I know won’t come amiss to you.”

“ Oh ! if that be all,” I said, wonderfully relieved ; for at first it struck me that Berton had been retaken, and a discovery made of my connivance at his escape.

“ The Lancashire weavers,” resumed my friend, “ are in open rebellion, burning power-looms, factories, and Cotton-Lords’ palaces ; and we are off, at a forced march, for the scene of action.”

“ Oh, Lord !” I exclaimed, sitting down disconsolately on my bed side, “ what on earth am I to do ?”

"What's the matter?" demanded Richardson.

"My poor Harriet!" I exclaimed with a sigh.

"Nonsense, man!" said my friend. "You take the distemper like a pointer pup, pardon the simile; but 'twill go off after three days' march. Moreover, between you and me, you are not yet fit for marriage."

"You think then," I said slyly, "that I want a little more schooling at billiards."

"Well," he replied, "you may make a better hazard than matrimony just now; and, depend upon it, your church canons are by no means so pleasant as those of the board of green cloth. But, come, dress and take your breakfast: your toast would have been all burnt to a cinder, if I hadn't ate it myself."

I got up with a heavy heart, dressed, breakfasted, and walked over to the orderly-room, where the adjutant was dictating to a dozen clerks and orderly-sergeants; and there I learned that we were to march at five o'clock

the following morning for Rochdale in Lancashire. All the guards were being relieved, baggage waggons loading, mess-plate packing, orderlies running in all directions, and the quarter-master drawing sixty rounds of ammunition per man from the garrison magazine; it was, in short, the first outbreak of what has since been termed "the Luddite War."

There was now no time to be lost ; so giving Tom King the necessary instructions to prepare for the road, I walked down to Stilton ; ruminating all the way on the best method of communicating this sad intelligence to Harriet, and thinking how I, who so much wanted consolation myself, could impart any to her.

I found Mrs. Sibley, and her daughters, sitting at work, and all were very grateful to me, for my conduct the night before. The two girls were sadly shocked, however, when I told them the news, especially Harriet, whose fine eyes kept filling with tears, till, at length, she was compelled to retire. Her

mother, I fancied, bore the matter with great philosophy. Perhaps, with the calculating coolness of age and experience, she thought Wigsby, with his wealthy establishment, would be a more eligible match than Ensign Blake, with his shifting inheritance of barrack-yard, and his personal chattels of camp furniture. She was right, I have now no doubt; but, at that time, I regarded her in the light of a cruel and remorseless step-mother.

I shall not trouble the reader with all the tender misery of leave-taking, for love scenes are only interesting to the parties concerned.

Suffice it to say, that Harriet and I vowed interminable affection, exchanged keepsakes, and promised to write to each other, at least, twice a week. We then kissed and parted; but such were the ever-springing changes in my "strange, eventful history," that I have never seen her since. Time, the great soother of all human calamities, which has left nothing more in my seared heart than a tender recol-

lection of my early love, has, I trust, been equally bountiful to poor Harriet; and if she still live, the happy mother of a host of young cheese-makers, perhaps her eye, as it wanders o'er my humble page, may yet drop a tear on this last sad tribute to her worth.

But, hurrah! the road is before us; the battle of life, the field of destiny invite us on; and the misty future, like Indra's heaven in the Hindoo mythology, spreads its banquets of delusions to our longing eyes. We commenced our march at daylight on the following morning; but before I quitted Norman Cross, I was gratified to learn that Berton had not left a single trace of his flight, and that he had every prospect of getting clear off to the continent.

My first march from Chelmsford was mere child's play, compared to the one I was now engaged in: forty miles a day, and this continuously for six days, tried our stamina very severely; but the weather was fine, and waggons were pressed every now and then to

carry the men's knapsacks and give an occasional lift to the weary and foot-sore. At length we reached the lofty and rugged eminence of Blackstone Edge, where we piled our arms and halted for half-an-hour; looking down upon one of those broad and verdant valleys of the manufacturing district, which would be eminently beautiful, if the gawky factories and smoky chimneys did not mar their picturesque outlines. As we again got under arms, and prepared to descend this lofty boundary between two such immense counties, a mad dog ran in amongst us; and while every one was endeavouring to get out of his way, as he gnashed his teeth and snapped at us with rabid fury, one of our mounted officers took a pistol from his holster and shot him; at the same time expressing a hope, that it would be the only blood we should have to shed in this domestic campaign. The omen, however, was not altogether vain.

On arriving at Rochdale, a large manufacturing town at the other extremity of the

valley, the regiment was partly distributed in billets, and partly lodged in an old factory, where a miscellaneous collection of barrack furniture was supplied, for the nonce, by general contribution of the inhabitants. The officers were accommodated in the large private mansion of a great Cotton-Lord, who had quitted the country in alarm and disgust, when the disturbances had gained such a head as to threaten life and property. Here we had scarcely effected a lodgment, when we were inundated with visitors; the Entwistles, the Royds, the Walmsleys, the Vavasours, the Holts, the Smiths; in short the heads of all the principal families in the town and neighbourhood called on us, and so overwhelmed us with civilities and invitations to dinners, balls, concerts, pic-nics, &c., that I began to fancy myself suddenly transported to my native land, in its palmiest days of prosperity and social enjoyment.

A great deal of this hospitable feeling, altogether so novel in England, must, of

course, be ascribed to the disturbed state of the country, which invested the arrival of an armed force with so much real importance in the eyes of all who had anything to lose ; but it would be unjust not to give the people credit for a great share of sincerity in the good feeling they professed. For my part, having been constantly received with almost parental kindness by many wealthy families, doubtless from a regard for my boyhood, for I was yet but sixteen, I shall ever entertain a grateful recollection of this my first and happiest campaign in the manufacturing district of Lancashire.

“ And the Lancashire witches ? ” I think I hear a reader exclaim. Ah ! thereby hangs a tale ; and I fear it will not redound to the honour of my fidelity. But let me not anticipate, for I really did still adore my far-distant Harriet, and had already exchanged letters with her ; giving, in return for her simple and natural effusions, a somewhat melo-dramatic history of my “ moving acci-

dents by flood and field" in the course of my northern peregrinations; descanting on the stubborn fortitude with which, in spite of tortured feet and muscular suffering, I had walked the whole way to set a due example to the soldiery, while the greatest veterans and hugest grenadiers had knocked-up and been glad to take refuge in the waggons; how I waded through rivers and rivulets, and clambered over rocks and mountains; how I volunteered to lead the advanced guard, and kept a sharp look-out with my Light-Bobs for lurking Luddites: in short, I fear my letter must have excited laughter instead of sympathy; for Harriet must have looked on her *preux chevalier* as a little of the romantic, and a great deal of the Gascon.

But the war is afoot, and I must sharpen my pen and nerve my style for the martial despatch rather than the effeminate love-letter. In one place, a steam-engine and a dozen power-looms are destroyed; in another a factory with three hundred windows burnt

to the ground; night and day we are on the alert, defending chateaux, extinguishing incendiary fires, putting mobs to the rout, apprehending Luddites, &c. &c. And then such scenes of squalid poverty and wretchedness as we had unwillingly to witness: fathers of families daily thrown out of work by the increase of steam machinery, incapable of earning food for their families by any other employment than the one to which they had been all their lives accustomed! Mothers with infants perishing at their breasts, through the exhaustion of the maternal fount! Children in the agony of starvation gazing on their hapless parents with looks of mingled reproach and pity! Alas! alas! Holbein, to harrow up the soul, has painted the "Dance of Death," but still more frightful is the Dance of Life!

Meanwhile, unbounded hospitality reigned in the houses of the rich, and the gallant defenders of accumulated wealth were everywhere the welcome and the favoured guests.

For them, the table groaned under its load of luxury ; for them, beauty lavished its countless fascinations ; for them, vocal and instrumental harmony filled the echoing concert-room, and the mazy dance spread its bland allurements. Billiard-rooms we had in abundance, and no markers to pay ; horses we had to ride, preserves to shoot, and hounds to follow ; while the worthy cotton-spinners, smothering in a 'plethora of wealth, seemed delighted with the healthy drain of which we were the willing instruments.

On a day, "alack the day !" it should be blotted from the stainless almanack of true love, I had accepted an invitation to dinner at the princely mansion of a mill-owner on the outskirts of the town. I had been up all night with a party of Light-Bobs, charging a gang of poor Luddites over moss and mountain, and had only got to bed at six o'clock in the morning, sleepy and fatigued beyond everything. I, therefore, did not wake till five o'clock in the afternoon ; and as the

dinner-hour was somewhat early, I had to hurry my preparations. Three or four others were also going, and we walked up together ; but finding the time was rapidly decreasing, we set to and had a run for it. I distanced my companions ; but, not satisfied with this, when I arrived at the entrance to the domain, I made a spring, and jumping over a very handsome gate of ornamental iron-work, about five feet high, found myself on the other side in the presence of a bevy of ladies, who had been screened from view by the boughs and foliage of a splendid acacia.

A general scream evinced the terror of these flushed birds of paradise ; for they looked upon my saltatory entrance as the advent of a gang of Luddites. The fair hostess, however, who was one of the party, and some other ladies of my acquaintance, received me with smiles of welcome ; and I was presented to three strangers, a widow lady with two daughters, just arrived from Bath.

A widow lady with two daughters ! Strange coincidence ! Fluellin found a sympathetic chord between the river in Wales and the river in Macedon ; but how, were I to discover an equally cogent reason for attaching myself to these lovely strangers, for lovely they certainly were ? Mrs. Netherby was in full possession of those three great requisites once so essential to the Mahommedan Elysium of Carlton Palace. Her eldest daughter, Theodosia, was full of grace, liveliness, and badinage ; but the younger, and by far the lovelier, was quiet, amiable, and reposed, like Harriet. Go to ! there's more sympathy for you.

Her movements were grace itself, her voice ethereal melody, her smile an embodied affection ; you almost looked after it as in imagination, it soared aloft to seek its native heaven. I know not how I felt when I took wine with her at dinner ; but this I know, that the humble juice of the Burgundian grape was suddenly changed to that

super-celestial liquid which, according to the Koran, Soliman-ben-Daoud has sealed with his own wise signet for the lips of True Believers ; and when I touched her hand in the dance I distinctly felt my love for poor Harriet oozing out, like the courage of Bob Acres, at my fingers' ends. Yet but a month, "a little month," had elapsed since I vowed interminable love to that injured fair one. A month!—nay not a month—the very ink was scarcely dry of my last amorous epistle—and yet—

"Oh, frailty ! thy name is Percy Blake !"

Mrs. Netherby and her fair daughters were natives of Lancashire, but had lived some years at Bath, where Mr. Netherby had recently died, leaving his brother, a wealthy mill-owner, joint guardian with his widow of the two young ladies. With this crusty old bachelor, for such I heard he was, they were now residing, being only on a visit of a few days with the family where I met them.

I slept but little that night, thinking of the fair vision I had encountered ; and the next morning, at the very earliest of all possible visiting hours, I was on my way to the shrine of my new divinity, in whose celestial presence the impression of the previous evening was more than strengthened, it was irrevocably confirmed :—yes, irrevocable is the word ; for who of mortal mould could withstand such a galaxy of charms ?

We walked through the grounds, the garden, the conservatory together ; laughed and chatted, talked of horticulture and flower exhibitions ; but, to my shame, it became evident that I scarcely knew the difference between a lily and a carnation. Poetry and the *belle arti*, and romance then succeeded ; and I was delighted to find that Mary had read nearly as much, and could appreciate quite as well as myself ; which was, however, not saying a great deal for either of us. In short, time flew with more than proverbial velocity ; “ with her conversing, I forgot all seasons,”

and parades ; and at six o'clock I was seated, I knew not how, by her side at the dinner-table : nay, so utterly oblivious was I of the "outward barbarians" who composed the world around us, that having asked her to take wine, and fancying myself at home with "the apple-greens," I called out in a voice of command : "Mess-waiter, champagne !"

This, of course, caused an explosion of laughter at my expense ; but I joined the merriment with all my heart and soul, while the face and neck of my ineffable Mary were suffused with blushes, for on her every eye was fixed as the sufficing cause of my blunder. In short, I had paid a morning visit to my kind friends, and it was long past midnight before I could tear myself away. As I tumbled into bed, that fellow Richardson thrust in his ugly phiz, and cried out loud enough to alarm the main guard : "In for it again, old fellow ! I told you how quick you would take the distemper."

The short visit of the Netherbys was about

to terminate, but I begged hard for a respite. I represented to them the really dangerous state of the country about Mr. Netherby's mill, the most disturbed portion of the district. I told them we were getting up races, subscription balls, and private theatricals ; and, at length, I prevailed on the dear mamma to get invited to another friend's house in the very town of Rochdale, actually only a few hundred yards from my own quarters ! Only fancy my delight !

But, poor Harriet ! Alas ! the thought of poor dear Harriet came over my heart, like a withering blight ; and I was compelled, as I fancied, in self-defence, to plunge into every sort of dissipation. I had not written to her for some time, and I reproached myself bitterly for my neglect, promising my accusing conscience that I would speedily make up for all by writing her a very voluminous and affectionate epistle, worth a dozen scribbled in the ordinary manner ; but I fear that my countrymen, according to the Portuguese proverb, contribute

more to the paving of a certain place than all the other "peoples" (to use a recently-adopted Gallicism) of the old world or the new. This plaguy epistle was put off from hour to hour, and from day to day, till at last it was dismissed altogether from my mind, like a hateful and unnecessary school task.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COTTON-LORD.

ABOUT this time we gave a splendid ball, in return for the many civilities we had received; and as the committee, of which I was one, had *carte-blanche*, we certainly spared neither trouble nor expense, as the managers say, in getting it up.

The ground floor of our mansion consisted of two splendid drawing-rooms, in one of which we generally messed: these were tastefully laid out for dancing; the floors were chalked by a London artist, and the walls, hung with festoons of flowers, sparkled with brilliant

girandoles, which shed a perfumed light around. The lawn was occupied by a suite of marquees, wherein a magnificent supper was spread for our numerous guests; and while a portion of our band played some of the fine old airs from *Don Juan*, the *Zauberflöte*, *Così fan tutti*, &c., a select few, in civilian full dress, well trained to the violin and bass, and led by our bandmaster, played exquisitely for the dancers. That night, that happy night, I had the unspeakable pleasure of walking a minuet with my beloved Mary; for this last remnant of courtly elegance had not as yet entirely disappeared.

I think I now see myself, in this age of short crops and other vulgarities, with my hair curled up in a lofty *toupee*, pomatumed and powdered with the most delicate art; my long *queue* clasped to the collar of my coat and hanging down lower than my very long waist; my coat buttoned back, my white flowered *Marseilles* waistcoat, white casimere small-clothes, flesh-coloured silk stockings

and shoes with silver buckles ; my opera hat under my arm, and a white silk waist-belt supporting a handsome dirk by my side ; did I not fancy myself the "glass of fashion and the mould of form !" *Eheu fugaces !* Half a century has nearly elapsed since that happy period ; and even at the risk of being classed amongst the *laudator temporis acti* tribe, I must express my regret that the glories of ancient costume should be so totally eclipsed by Blucher boots, Wellington overalls, and ruffianly hats called wide-awakes !

It was, however, a period of transition in the *régime* of the ball-room ; the stately dresses and dances of the olden time, the minuet de la cour, the embroidered coat, the bag wig and sword, and laced ruffles and frills, were reluctantly giving way before the prim and finical costume, the frisky waltz, and flirting quadrille of the succeeding period ; Sir Roger de Coverley and the Boulanger being a sort of commonwealth interregnum.

As I had acquired the continental dances

at Norman Cross, and Mary and her sister had been accustomed to them at Bath, we got up a very successful quadrille; and even flew through the room in *la sauteuse*, to the astonishment of the cotton-spinners, who had never seen anything of the kind before. Thus, I may say that, through our means, the introduction of the waltz was coeval in Lancashire with that of the power-loom. What a revolution in arts and manners has been caused by both!

It is needless to say that the whole of this grand entertainment passed off with decided éclat, and we were universally voted to be an immense acquisition to the manufacturing district in every respect. It was succeeded by races, at which I had the good fortune to ride two winning horses, and to be hailed each time as I came in triumphantly by the immense assemblage of beauty and fashion that crowded our temporary stand; displaying, as I conspicuously did upon my left arm, a circlet of violets and rose-buds, gathered for

me that morning by the fair hands of the beautiful Mary.

In the evening we had, of course, a race-ball; and this was succeeded by a series of subscription assemblies, which were attended by every one of any consequence in the whole district. They were, however, productive of something that was not quite pleasant to me: for some "good-natured friend" wrote to old Netherby, strictly confidential, of course, that his favourite niece, with her large fortune and great expectations, was actually throwing herself away on an Irishman whom nobody knew, and who, in all probability, was nothing but a mere fortune-hunter, that had nothing to settle on his wife but his portion of the barrack-yard. All this came to my ears long after, when it was too late to remedy the evil.

Old Netherby came into town in an immense fluster, and insisted on his wards going off with him instantly to the country, with which arbitrary command they were, it seems, bound to comply. I caught them just as

they were stepping into the carriage; but when I ran up to salute them as usual, the old cotton-twister called out in a gruff voice, "keep your distance, Sir!" Shocked and astonished as I felt, I was prevented from chastising him on the spot by an imploring look from Mary, whose eyes filled with tears as she held out her hand, and indulged me with a gentle pressure; while Mrs. Netherby kindly bade me farewell, and Theodosia favoured me with a warmer adieu as she playfully hummed the well-known refrain from "Joconde,"

" Et l'on revient toujours
A ses premiers amours!"

which fortunately was all Arabic to the ignorant old factory-boy.

Thus unjustly and cavalierly was I treated by this money-grubbing old hunk; but I had a glorious revenge not long after.

During all these gay doings in town, the country continued in a dreadful state of disturbance, in spite of all our efforts; and no

troops were ever worked harder on actual service than we were at this period. But our proceedings against the unhappy and misguided Luddites were always marked with clemency; and it was with pity, almost amounting to horror, that we ever came into actual collision with them, from which, of course, they always suffered severely. Yet we had a stern duty to perform to the government, and the community at large; and I am happy to say that we did so to the entire satisfaction of the authorities, and of all rational and reflecting persons who were witnesses of our conduct.

One night, when I had gone to bed, hoping to dream of my absent Mary, I was suddenly roused from my first sleep by Tom King, bearing an order for me to start immediately with a detachment of twenty rank and file to protect Mr. Netherby's mill.

"Burn old Netherby!" I exclaimed in my wrath. "I hope they'll set fire to his mill, and stick him on the top of it."

Strange to say, this was precisely the feat they attempted to perform.

I set off, however, with my detachment in light spring-waggon, which were always kept ready for such emergencies ; and, though the distance was nearly thirty miles, we galloped it in three hours. It was fortunate that we did so, for the attack was already commenced, and the Luddites were breaking in the hall-door of the dwelling-house with sledge hammers. The entrance to the grounds being obstructed by an *abattis* of young trees, uprooted for the purpose, we dismounted, and, forming in sections, went up the avenue at double quick. I had given my men orders not to fire, and to do as little mischief as possible. Consequently, the Luddites, whom we instantly scattered, escaped with a few bayonet wounds. Having some old guns and pistols amongst them, they had the madness, however, to fire, and wound two of my party ; but I effectually dispersed them with a volley, which brought down two or three

half-naked wretches, happily, without killing them.

I leave the reader to judge of my delight, when I opened the door of the parlour, whence issued several female screams, in every tone and cadence, caught the trembling and almost fainting Mary in my arms, and was actually kissed by her mother and sister.

After all, I was still a mere youth; and might, without any imputation on their discretion, be treated by these dear ladies, in such an emergency, as a son, and a brother. I restored their confidence, by assuring them that every danger had vanished; and was overwhelmed with grateful thanks by all, for my timely assistance. I then inquired for Mr. Netherby, who was nowhere to be found, but, while we were engaged in searching for him, some one cried out, "the mill! the mill is on fire!"

Looking towards this source of wealth, in which the soul of old Netherby was wrapped

up, and which stood over a brook three or four hundred yards from the house, we saw the flames bursting out from some of its numerous windows. Leaving a guard to protect the dwelling-house, I formed the rest in line, gave the word "double!" and we were speedily alongside the mill, which was now burning at a furious rate, while old Netherby, at one of the second-floor windows, was shouting for assistance with all his lungs.

The Luddites, not satisfied with destroying his property, had actually locked him up in his own mill, to perish by the most horrible of all deaths. The sufferings, whether real, or imaginary, of such people, must have been great, indeed, to drive them to such extremities.

The moment the old man recognized me by the light of the flames, he cried out, in a voice of agony,—

"Oh! Captain, Captain, save my life! save my life!"

"Excuse me, sir," I coolly replied, "I know how to keep my distance."

"Nay, nay, Captain dear," he exclaimed, "I heartily beg thee pardon. Dontee, dontee, let me perish in this awsome manner, and I'll do anything for thee in t' varsal world."

But I turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and had the cruelty to look on unmoved, till he was thoroughly frightened, when he began to curse and blaspheme at an awful rate. I then directed the men to place a long ladder up against the window, and the half delirious wretch descended; but not a moment too soon, for his coat-tails were actually singed with the devouring element.

The mill, however, was burnt to the ground; but, as the cunning old curmudgeon was fully insured, he lost little or nothing by the night's transaction. He never forgave me for not saving him five minutes sooner than I did; and when he and his nieces moved into Rochdale, for protection, till the

storm blew over, he had influence enough to get me sent on detachment to Oldham, where I was recommended to keep close, and study—patience, and the eighteen manœuvres.

CHAPTER X.

THE FACTORY HOP.

AT that period, Oldham was, I think, the most detestable hole I had ever put my foot into ; what it may be since it was promoted to the rank of a borough, and has got a man of sense and eloquence to represent it in parliament, I can't say ; but an inference may be drawn from that circumstance to its advantage. It was a mean, ugly, ill-built, straggling, dirty, dingy, gloomy-looking old place ; the very refuse and dust-hole, so to speak, of the entire manufacturing district. It was always enveloped in rain, or drizzle, or mist, and its inhabitants were cross, ill-

tempered, sour, and suspicious ; if a dog only barked in the street—and they were always barking—this vocal expression of thought, or instinct, was sure to terminate in a half-frantic howl, or a melancholy whine ; and even the very cats, as they made love in the gutters of the steep, sombre, puritanical house-tops, vented their amorous wishes in a combination of diabolical yells and screams, that often drove me distracted.

I was quartered in an old deserted mansion, a little way in the fields off the main street ; and the magistrate, as he put me in possession, hinted that it was large enough for all my detachment, if I chose to have them with me, to defend me from the Lud-dites. I cared nothing at all about the Lud-dites, I said ; they and I were very good friends till we came to blows, and then we always paid off old scores till the next day of reckoning. I therefore requested the magistrate to put the men into billets, which would be more agreeable to them, and keep

them more *au courant* as to what was passing amongst the enemy. The magistrate complied with my wishes, and I was thus left in peaceable possession of the old *casa*, with my orderly, and Tom King, who was a very good cook in a small way, and expert and handy in all other respects.

It was now the depth of winter (1808), and the snow lay thick upon the earth; its pure white mantle, which wrapped in its ample fold the country round, as far as the eye could reach, bringing out in more grim and startling relief the hunch of dark, shapeless buildings that constituted the town of Oldham; while the tall chimneys of its numerous factories sent forth in rapid succession huge volumes of thick, black smoke, that looked like vast blotches of London mud dashed against the cold, leaden background of the sky.

The prospect was, indeed, dreary beyond description; but I exerted myself to make all snug in my own especial quarter, which

was a room on the first floor, fortunately wind and water-tight. Here I laid down my carpet, wheeled my camp-bed within a few paces of the fire-place, which always blazed and crackled cheerfully ; piled my table with books, drawings, and musical instruments ; then, with my pointer and water-spaniel reposing on the rug, and my fishing-rod, double-barrelled Manton, shot-belt, and game-bag, arranged artistically over the mantle-piece, I boldly bade defiance to the foul fiend. My servant and orderly made themselves equally comfortable in the kitchen, whither my pay-sergeant, and two or three other old hands, resorted of an evening, to smoke a pipe and have a gossip, under pretence of asking for orders, which they very well knew I never troubled them with, as everything in this delectable old regiment went like a patent chronometer.

I must not, however, forget my "stranger's room ;" a large, lofty, gloomy apartment, immediately over mine, with a huge, yawning

fire-place, and elevated mantel-piece, altogether displaying a grim and ghastly aspect. It was, however, the only inhabitable room in the whole building, except my own and the kitchen; but when I had it cleaned out, and hired a comfortable, capacious bed, with some other articles of furniture for it, it didn't make a bad bivouac for any chance visitors from head-quarters, who might come over for a day's sport on the extensive moors, or mosses, as they are called, that lay around us.

Over this stranger's room was a suite of uninhabitable garrets; and as the sky-lights were frequently blown off by the wind, the cats held high carnival therein, very often to the total banishment of sleep, even after a long day's fag on the moors.

With all my anxiety to see my beloved Mary again, I never went over to head-quarters; for though I was not forbidden to do so, Sir George knew perfectly well that, where a point of duty was concerned, I stuck like a

burr to my post, even to the sacrifice of my own dearest wishes. My brother officers, however, frequently came over to see me ; and even Colonel Foley took it into his head one night to send a case of Claret to my quarters, and bring over a whist party with him, to enjoy, as he said, a quiet rubber of five guinea points *sub rosa*. I gave them a good out-post supper of spatch-cocks, devilled drumsticks, fried bacon and eggs, and roasted potatoes ; and the Claret case having been emptied, we finished the *sederunt* with Irish whiskey, of which I had recently received a dozen bottles from my brother, who had paid a short business visit to Liverpool. My guests, who were all top-sawyers of the regiment, were highly gratified with their entertainment ; and I thought Foley would have gone into fits, when I gave him a description of the roasting of old Netherby.

Still, however, "with all appliances and means to boot," the long, long evenings being somewhat irksome, I sighed for a return

to that Elysium from which I had been unjustly banished by the jealousy of an ogre ; and though I felt immense pleasure in scribbling "sonnets to my mistress' eyebrow," all of which were duly inscribed to "the belle of all Lancashire witches !" I would occasionally throw down the pen in dull despair that I was not rather playing duets, or dancing the *boulangier* with the fair enslaver herself.

It thus occurred to me one evening about the middle of December, when unable any longer to bear the burthen of my own thoughts, I determined to sally out and visit my billets; just to ask, *pro forma*, if there were any complaints, though nothing ever went amiss with the old "apple-greens." Tom King had received permission to spend the evening at a Christmas merry-making ; for the factory boys and girls began their Christmas, as they did their day's work, betimes ; so, leaving the cats and the orderly to keep house, forth I went, accompanied

by my dogs, and wrapping my cloak about me, to keep off the biting wind of the bleak hill-side on which Oldham is built.

Having gone my rounds, and found all snug and ready for emergencies, I sauntered towards the outskirts of the town, and was about to return to my quarters; when, on turning a corner, the music of a violin, accompanied by loud laughter, and the sound of merry voices, struck my ear; issuing from a public-house a little off the road, the windows of which were all in a blaze of luminous tallow.

I strolled up to the scene of merriment, which was on the ground-floor, and as doors and windows were all wide open, I had no difficulty in gaining a complete view of this factory-hop. The room was crowded to excess with young men and women, dressed out in their best toggery, footing it right and left with all the noise and velocity of a steam-engine; while some of the seniors of both

sexes were pledging each other in quarterns of gin and pots of ale; and the concentrated smoke of three dozen pipes hovered, like a semi-diaphanous canopy, over the heads of the dancers.

All this part of the entertainment I could understand perfectly, but there was one circumstance that puzzled me exceedingly. In the midst of the dancers stood, with his back to me, an officer in the uniform of my regiment, apple-green facings, silver lace, &c. Nay, as I live, he had wings on his shoulders instead of epaulettes, and bore other unmistakable signs of belonging to my own company. Who could he possibly be? He was not like, in figure at least, any of my brother subs; and I could not at all fancy Lord Rodney taking a frisk in this unsophisticated fashion. The mysterious stranger, however, as if determined to baffle my curiosity, never once turned round, but kept his eyes fixed on his partner, a very pretty girl, who returned him glance for glance, and with interest.

At length, in the evolution of "cross hands and back again," I got a full view of my gentleman; and "may I never die a sinner!" as they say in Ireland, if it was not the identical Tom King, dressed in full ball costume; with my second best coatee, white waistcoat, casimere small-clothes, silk stockings and shoes, and silver buckles; his head one mass of pomatum and powder, and his left breast decorated with sundry pinch-beck crosses and copper medals, duly burnished for the great occasion!

I was, at first, terribly enraged at this desecration of my cherished uniform; but I could not help being amused when I saw the fellow's airs and graces, his dignified demeanour, and patronising smiles; while factory-boys looked on with jealous eye, and factory-girls with bursting envy at the superior luck of her who had drawn this capital prize in the lottery of the festival. At length, when Mr. King had got to the top of the dance, and was about to go down the middle

with his fair partner, I walked in, seized him by the ear, wheeled him round, and said :

“ Get out, you rascal ! I’ll finish the dance for you.”

The amazement that seized on all present cannot be described ; but when they saw their late “ admired of all admirers ” slink out of the room, they began to suspect the real state of the case. Every one crowded round me, putting a thousand questions ; but I laid my cloak aside, made my bow to the destitute fair one, the Ariadne of the night, and said if she did not prefer the man to the master I would be most happy to lead her down the dance.

I now took the hand of my partner who, “ nothing loth,” seconded my efforts, and we went down the dance to the admiration of all present. Many slapped me on the back, exclaiming, I was “ a rum un to look at, but a good un to go ! ” while others handed me pots of ale and glasses of British gin, a beverage just one degree less atrocious than Spanish

aguardiente. In short I was the hero of the festival, a sort of honorary Luddite at a Grand Orient of the craft; and I would have willingly given my next month's balance in the paymaster's hand, if Foley could have seen me in the midst of my glory.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAT-ASTROPHE.

I said nothing to Mr. King, in the way of rebuke, for some days after, the poor devil looked so crest fallen and repentant ; but as muster-day (the 24th) was now drawing nigh, I thought it would be a good opportunity to employ him in a little scheme of revenge which I meditated on the paymaster for his share in the adventure of Dorothy Dawkins. Poor Davis, with all his cleverness and cunning, was decidedly the greatest coward I ever met with in the shape of a man, and he had an especial horror of the Luddites and

their doings, scarcely ever venturing a mile from head-quarters without a competent escort to guarantee his precious existence. On this failing I built my enterprise.

Davis would gladly have brought the detachment over to head-quarters to be mustered; indeed, he had the folly to propose this measure to the commanding officer, and met with a very just rebuke. He had nothing for it, therefore, but to face the danger; and he wrote me word that as the roads were fairly snowed up and impassable for a carriage, he would ride over early, that he might get back in good time for dinner, having some friends at mess. This arrangement, however, did not suit my tactics; so I sent Tom King, to the different billets, to order the men to keep close, and not to stir out on any account, till they heard my bugle in the evening for muster. I then directed him to leave the sky-lights open, and to decoy all the cats he could into the attic exactly over the "strangers' room," where he was then to shut them up.

He was, in the next place, to buy me a quantity of squibs, crackers, and blue lights, and to provide a few bags of damp shavings, such as would give more smoke than flame. Thus prepared for action, I awaited the coming of the evening.

At twelve o'clock, Davis arrived in great bustle, exceedingly anxious to get over this indispensable piece of duty; but he looked terribly blank when I told him the men were all absent.

"I have a sergeant and six out towards Manchester," I said, "where a fine cotton-mill was burnt down last night; a corporal and four in the direction of Middleton, chasing some prisoners that have broken out of our jail; another corporal's party has just been applied for by Higginbottom down there at the saw-mills, which are threatened with immediate conflagration; and I hold the rest in hand to repel an attack of Luddites which the magistrates anticipate in the course of the night."

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Davis, "what

am I to do? Stay—let me see—I have it: I'll muster all the men you have present, and return all the rest absent on duty."

"You shall do no such thing," I replied; "at least, I'll not sign your muster-roll, for I expect the men in every hour."

"My dear Blake," he said in a wheedling tone, "you will not, surely, make a difficulty with me in such a trifle as this."

"Duty is duty," I replied, "and must be attended to, in spite of friendship. If it were a private affair, now, such as placing you properly before the muzzle of an adversary's pistol in the *champ-clos*, the case would be different."

"Good gracious!" he cried, apparently but little pleased with my hypothesis, "what is to be done? I have all the Royds, Entwistles, Walmsleys, and Clutterbucks to dine with me to-day at the mess."

"You will still be in sufficient time," I said; "for I told the men to make haste back to muster."

"I say, my dear fellow," cried the cunning attorney, taking me lovingly by the arm, "you know, there's an old balance, that's always a bone of contention between us."

"Well," I said, "what of it?"

"I'll draw a pen through it," said Davis, "if you will only oblige me this once."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, with a look of offended dignity, "if you think to bribe me from the stern path of rectitude, you don't know your man, Mr. Davis," and turning on my heel, I left him to his cogitations.

These were, doubtless, bitter enough; for hour followed hour in dull succession, and yet none of my absent parties came in. At last, Davis ran up to me, as I walked backwards and forwards before the door with a cigar in my mouth, and cried:

"Percy, my boy, have you nothing to eat in this old Castle Rackrent of yours?"

"Dinner will be on the table in ten minutes," I replied, looking at my watch;

"and while we are enjoying ourselves, I have no doubt the parties will arrive."

We accordingly sat down to table; but, in spite of creature comforts and generous old port, Davis was chap-fallen and down-hearted; for I kept plying him with imaginary stories of Luddite outrage and fearful conflagrations, in which I burnt more people than were ever accounted for in the bills of mortality. I described to him, also, the Lancashire system of gouging and heel-tapping.

"This Oldham," I said, "is the wickedest place in the whole manufacturing district. If a fellow here once gets you down, Davis, he'll twist his forefinger into that dandy side-lock of yours, and scoop out your eye with his thumb, as clean as a whistle."

"Good gracious! what savages!" cried Davis, with a shudder.

"That is when they mean to be merciful," I continued; "but, when really bent on mischief, they have recourse to heel-tapping."

"What's that?" demanded Davis.

"You have remarked the thick wooden-soled shoes they wear?" I said.

"Yes," replied Davis, "and am astonished how they can walk in such things."

"If a fellow gets you down here," I said, "with one of those wooden shoes he'll soon reduce your head to the consistency of a squashed egg-shell."

These tales totally prostrated the small modicum of courage that fluttered in the breast of the paymaster. At last, when it began to grow dusk, and his patience and spirits were alike exhausted, enter Tom King to inform me that Sergeant Edwards had arrived with his party, and sixteen wounded prisoners. A little time after, a similar announcement was made of the arrival of Corporal James, without any prisoners, having shot four Luddites dead.

"Then tell the bugler to sound for parade,"

I said; "the other party may arrive while the men are falling in."

The streets of Oldham soon resounded with the "too-to-to-too," and in less than ten minutes my detachment marched into the court-yard, and drew up in front of my quarters.

"Bless my soul!" said Davis, who was fortunately near-sighted, "your men look very fresh and clean after such hard service."

"Oh, yes," I answered, "I keep my detachment always in prime order; we pride ourselves on that point at Oldham."

"Now," said Davis, "let us proceed at once, for I have not a moment to lose."

We accordingly descended to the court-yard; and fortunately, Davis was so intent on despatch, that he made no more observations on the appearance of the men, whose names he called over as fast as he could gabble. But, with every effort, night came

on before the conclusion, and the last half-dozen he had to call over by the light of a lantern.

"Good heavens!" cried the mystified paymaster, as he raised his eyes from the muster-roll, "'tis quite dark. What on earth am I to do?"

"You had better get a chaise from the inn," I replied. "Run over, King, and order a chaise for Mr. Davis. They have one, I know, to my cost, for it broke down with me the other day, and nearly stopped my promotion."

"Thank you, my dear fellow," said the grateful paymaster. "'Twas a lucky thought; it quite escaped me, I'm so bewildered."

In a few minutes, Tom King returned, with intelligence that their only chaise was snowed up three miles on the road to Rochdale.

"The post-boy has just returned, Sir," said King, telling a very circumstantial lie,

"and his nose is so frost-bitten 'tis thought he'll lose it, poor fellow."

"Dear me ! dear me !" cried Davis, wringing his hands, "I must ride, then."

"But if you should go astray, my dear friend, in the dark," I suggested.

"True, true," said he, ruminating.

"Then, again," I observed, "those villainous Luddites 'know you to be the paymaster ; and if they should fancy you have a money-bag, or a bundle of notes about you—"

"Oh dear ! oh dear !" sighed poor Davis.

"A chance shot from behind a hedge," I said, "may kill Lucifer himself, according to the proverb."

"But, my dear fellow," gasped out the poor wretch, "can't you send a party of six men with me ? One can lead my horse, you know, and the rest keep off the Luddites."

"What !" I exclaimed, "after they have

been all night and all day crossing the country in every direction !”

“ But some,” said the cunning fellow, “ havn’t been out at all, you know.”

“ These,” I replied, “ I hold at the magistrate’s disposal in the anticipated attack. It would be as much as my commission is worth to part with a man of them.”

Poor Davis threw himself down upon my bed, utterly exhausted in mind and body ; till, at length, after turning over every expedient again and again, he finally concluded on stopping for the night as a choice of evils ; entreating me, however, to order a party into the house for his especial protection, which I promised to do. After supper, when he had imbibed a sufficient quantity of Dutch courage, I showed him to his bedroom, the grim aspect of which made him shudder ; and it was not till I had repeatedly assured him of protection against all dangers, that he ventured to creep under the bed-clothes.

About two o'clock in the morning I gently opened Davis's room door, which of course had no lock to it; and igniting a bundle of damp shavings I pushed it inside; this was succeeded by another, and another, till the room was filled with a dense oppressive smoke, which soon affected the lungs of the sleeper, who began to cough violently, and to exclaim:

"Bless my soul! I am choking! What can be the matter with me? How oppressive it is! What a smoke! I smell something burning. Oh Lord! the house is on fire! murder! murder!"

At that instant a tremendous explosion took place of squibs and crackers, reverberating like so many twenty-four pounders in the empty rooms overhead. This was succeeded by the hissing, spitting and yelling of a dozen cats, in the midst of which the explosion had taken place; while two or three empty arm-chests came thundering down stairs, as if the whole house was falling

was at last overtaken half a mile off by Tom King and the orderly, whom I sent in search of him, with a couple of blankets. They conveyed him, shivering with cold, and groaning with horror, to the inn, where he was put to bed, wrapped up in blankets, with a bottle of hot water to his feet; and before I myself was up in the morning, he had departed for Rochdale.

I fear, however, I carried my vengeance too far against poor Davis, for he had an attack of quinsey, in consequence, that nearly cost him his life; and he soon after went on leave of absence, to avoid the anticipated bantering of his brother officers.

CHAPTER XII.

VOLUNTEERING.

SUCH, in brief, were the incidents of my early career : a period during which I certainly enjoyed life in its most attractive form ; receiving on all hands a kind, considerate indulgence, which was in some degree, perhaps, due to my extreme youth and boyish habits. But a change now came over the spirit of my dream, and I was speedily hurried into the vicissitudes of foreign service ; which, though differing in character from those I had already experienced, were even still more rife with amusing incident and picturesque variety.

Some of my readers, perhaps, will recollect the extensive volunteering from the militia to the line, which took place in the Spring of 1809; and which enabled government not only to put Sir Arthur Wellesley at the head of a gallant army in Portugal, but also to send one of the finest armaments that ever left the shores of Great Britain, to perish miserably in the swamps of Walcheren. This volunteering I had been long anxiously anticipating, as the only certain means of advancement in my profession: for I could not imagine any pursuit so preposterous as that of playing at soldiers in the militia, which seemed to be the utmost stretch of so many men's ambition; and though I dearly loved my charming mistress, yet so far was I from coveting her wealth, or speculating on enriching myself through her means, that I longed with intense ardour for an opportunity of distinguishing myself in the field, that I might, on the contrary, load her with riches and honour.

This opportunity now presenting itself, I eagerly turned it to account, by canvassing for volunteers amongst my detachment; and such was either their personal regard for me, or their real desire for foreign service, that every man of them declared his intention of going with me into the line. This was the flattering aspect of my affairs when the Oldham detachment was called in; and, with infinite joy, we marched out of that detestable hole, on a fine spring morning, for head-quarters.

Midway between Oldham and Rochdale, we halted at a public-house, where I ordered every man a pint of ale; and a travelling pedlar happening to pass, I purchased all the ribbons he had in his box, which I distributed amongst my volunteers, whose caps were speedily decorated with flaunting streamers. We then resumed our march; the bugle occasionally throwing out martial blasts before us, or our fifer playing "the Girl I left behind me," that immortal melody, so

redolent of tender recollections and martial inspiration.

Luckily, before we reached head-quarters, we met Captain Baker and another brother officer taking a ride. The former, a steady good old fellow whispered to me ; "for heaven's sake, Percy, my boy, halt your men, and take those ribbons out of their caps, or you'll drive Sir George Cornwall distracted."

I accordingly halted my detachment, and walking aside with Baker, I asked him what he meant.

"My dear boy," he replied, "you fancy, perhaps, that these men are going with you to the line."

"Certainly," I replied, "they have all promised."

"You won't have one of them," said Baker.

"Why not?" I demanded in amazement.

"Can you imagine for a moment," he asked, "that Sir George, who has taken so much pains to make this regiment what it is,

will suffer the loss of his very best men ? or, that Lord Rodney can brook the idea of having his hobby of a crack company so completely knocked on the head, as to allow the *élite* of his Light Bobs to slip through his fingers in this way ?”

“They may not, perhaps, like it,” I said ; “but how can they prevent it, if the men wish to go ?”

“Oh ! trust me,” he replied, “that will not be difficult. There are many ways of damping this martial ardour, that you are not aware of ; and a commanding officer has it always in his power to send to the line just the subjects he wishes to get rid of, and no others.”

“You open my eyes to a chapter in volunteering,” I said, “that gives me infinite pain ; for I have become so well acquainted with these men, in this mock warfare of ours, that I really did hope to have the pleasure of leading them into the field of real service.”

“There is no one of my acquaintance

more capable of doing it," said Baker, to soothe my chafed spirit ; " but take my advice, Percy, and let Sir George manage the matter his own way, for, at all events, you are sure of attaining the object of your ambition."

Thus, the splendid picture I had been so long feasting my imagination with, of future battles, at the head of my cherished Light Bobs, was knocked on the head ; and I resumed the march of my detachment, shorn of their "blushing honours," in a desponding mood to head-quarters.

But fortune, as if to make amends for this unexpected check, afforded me, soon after, at least a temporary glimpse of happiness ; for, as we were descending into Rochdale, a travelling carriage, with imperials, and maid and footman in the rumble, came tearing up the road at full speed. It passed me like lightning ; but I caught a glimpse of my dear Mary, who waved her handkerchief to me out of the window, and, either through accident

or design, let it drop. I caught the dear missive before it reached the ground, and pressing it to my lips, buried it in my breast, close to my heart.

But an agonizing thought flashed, for an instant, across my brain. Where could she be going to at such top-speed, and with every appearance of commencing a long journey? Could she be leaving Rochdale for ever? Pshaw! the idea was too ridiculous, but it was also exquisitely painful. It could only be for a short trip to Manchester, or to some friend's house in the neighbourhood. But I would soon learn the reality; and, somewhat reassured by my own hopeful suggestions, I marched my detachment to the barracks, reported my arrival personally to the commanding officer, and by the time I reached my own quarters, the first bugle was sounding for dinner.

My brother officers were all glad to see me again, and Foley cried out,—

“Come and sit by me, Mr. Blake; I want

to catechise you somewhat stringently on the nature of your recent services."

I accordingly took post by my worthy friend, who kept plying me with wine during dinner, as if he thought I wanted, or might in the course of the evening, require some stimulus of more than ordinary efficacy.

When the mess waiters had retired, I gave him a round unvarnished tale of my late adventures. He was delighted with the factory hop, and the metamorphosis of Tom King; but I thought he would have gone into convulsions when I described the frightful adventure of the cats and crackers. All these doings I had to repeat for the general amusement, and great, indeed, were the explosions of laughter at the expense of poor Davis. The customary placid smile of Sir George Cornwall, was heightened to a most unaristocratical broad-grin; and Lord Rodney, who invariably turned down his glass when he had taken his diurnal pint of wine, absolutely

committed the debauch of a whole bottle, to enjoy the fun.

Unluckily, the young fellow whom I had met on the road with Baker in the morning, anxious to contribute his share of amusement *aux fruits de la fête*, heedlessly asked Sir George, if he had seen the splendid recruiting party which marched into Rochdale that afternoon.

"No," replied Sir George. "Have they commenced beating up in Rochdale?"

"Yes, Sir George," replied young Roberts, "but not among the weavers though."

"Where else can they find recruits in Lancashire?" demanded Sir George.

"Amongst the Apple-greens, to be sure," replied Roberts.

"What, what, what?" cried Sir George, hastily. "What do you say, sir?"

Here this silly young man, in spite of Baker's signs, frowns, and winks, gave a ludicrous account of my volunteer exhibition, which caused an immediate explosion.

"Good gracious, Sir George," cried Lord

Rodney, "I must appeal to you to put a stop to such proceedings. I cannot suffer my company to be broken up in this manner with impunity."

I never saw Sir George frown before, but he did on this occasion; and, fixing his eyes on me, he said,—

"I hope, Mr. Blake, you have not been tampering with the men."

"Sir George," I replied, somewhat chafed at the question, "I never tamper. I always go straight to my point, as becomes a gentleman; and if any one has a doubt on the subject, he knows how and when he may be satisfied."

"Mr. Blake, I must apologize," returned Sir George, with that delicate sense of honour he really entertained, "for having inadvertently used a term that was remote from my intention; but I must request you to state explicitly, whether you have spoken with the men of your detachment, on the subject of volunteering."

"Unquestionably I have," I replied; "and

I thought myself fully justified in so doing, until I was undeceived by my friend Baker."

"That is the simple fact, Sir George," added Baker; "the moment I hinted the irregularity of the proceeding, it was abandoned with the most praiseworthy alacrity."

"Oh! 'tis all a mistake," said Foley, "a muscicular abortion of Mr. Roberts's wit. My friend Blake is altogether incapable of doing anything disingenuous or clandestine."

"I am quite satisfied that it is so," returned Sir George. "But in fact, Mr. Blake has no occasion in the world to take any trouble in the matter. I undertake to send men enough to the line to insure him his commission; and I have this day received from the Horse Guards the numbers of six capital regiments from which he may make a selection."

This was, indeed, highly gratifying. I expressed my thanks for his kindness, and the numbers of the regiments being mentioned, my friends were all eager to assist me in making a good choice. After many *pour parlers*,

I finally fixed on the Fifty-second ; because, in the first place, it was a Light-Infantry regiment, and secondly, it was under orders for the Peninsula.

"This point being settled," resumed Sir George, "I propose to give Mr. Blake leave of absence from all parades and duties whatsoever till he is gazetted ; that he may have full opportunity to revel in the field of Venus before he embarks in the field of Mars."

"And, that," said Foley *sotto voce* to me, "reminds me of a point upon which I have been anxious to speak to you this evening."

"What, my dear Colonel," I said gaily, "are you also about to abandon the ivy-crowned god, for the meretricious daughter of Neptune ? To disclaim your '*Evoe Bacche !*' for the

" ' Bella Venere,
Che sola sei
Piacer degli uomini,
E degli Dei ! ' "

He looked, however, so grave on the

matter that my mind misgave me, and I awaited an explanation in breathless impatience.

"You are about to enter on a career," said Foley, "that will exact your undivided energy, both mental and physical."

"I trust," I said, "that I feel a just conviction of its importance."

"Of that," he replied, "I am fully assured, and therefore the sacrifice of other ties will come all the more easy to you."

"What on earth are you driving at, my dear friend?" I demanded.

"The affections of a young heart," continued Foley, with more feeling than I had ever thought he possessed, "cannot, perhaps, be all at once subdued; but they may, at least, be kept in abeyance, till time and the paramount calls of duty, can in some degree soften the blow."

"The blow!" I exclaimed open-mouthed.

"You have not, then," he said with a look of pity, "heard the news?"

"News!" I cried, "what news?"

"The Netherbys," he said, "are gone."

"Gone!" I cried with a shout, starting from my chair.

"Hush! hush!" said Foley, pressing me down again. "Don't betray yourself—be more a man! When old Netherby heard you were coming back, he sent them off to Bath, with orders, indeed, to fly to the ends of the earth to avoid you."

I had suffered greatly during the day; my ambition had been checked, my pride hurt, my hopes damped; and now the fondly cherished bliss of my heart was crushed and trampled on. Words were rushing to my lips, struggling in vain for utterance; thoughts were racking my brain, feelings rending my heart—but the storm of contending passions found no vent, a stream of blood gushed from my nostrils, and I sank into a swoon upon the floor.

When I came to my senses, I found myself in bed, my left arm bandaged, where the

doctor had breathed a vein, my head light, my thoughts confused, and Foley, with three or four kind-hearted fellows sitting by my side.

When at length I began to recollect all that had occurred, I felt in my left breast ; but, finding all vacant there, I began to fumble about the bed-clothes, as if in search of something. Foley, who saw what I wanted, unlocked my table-drawer, took out a small parcel, nicely folded in silver paper, and put it into my hand, whispering, at the same time,—

“This dropped out when they were undressing you. I saw the initials, and, guessing the secret, put it safely by for you.”

I warmly pressed his hand, while the tears started to my eyes ; and I placed the precious relic, the last token of my lost Mary, on my heart, where it lay for three years, till I lost it—and my life nearly with it—at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo.

In a few days I was about once more, and

having no military duties to perform, I should have enjoyed my liberty, but she who would have made that and every other good tenfold sweet to my heart, was no where to be found. It was in vain that I visited in succession, and repeatedly, every family, every spot where I had once enjoyed her dear company, now hallowed in my thoughts as the shrine in the desert to the pilgrim, though deprived of its presiding deity. Society at length became hateful to me ; I plunged into the country, lonely and sad, and rambled over moss and mountain, venting my sighs to the unconscious wind, or indulging in day-dreams of future glory and happiness with the loadstar to which my thoughts invariably reverted.

But, alas ! she was gone for ever, and once more were my affections doomed to be blighted. The reader may, perhaps, be disposed to impugn my fidelity, for thus transferring these affections so lightly from one to another ; but, at least, he will do me the justice to say that I really had no choice in

the matter, and that I was by no means a willing deserter. Neither could it be correctly called a transfer of affection from Harriet to Mary, for Heaven is my witness that I loved them both sincerely, even after I had lost them. This, indeed, is so truly the case, that, if ever I am tempted to invent a new religion, it shall so far resemble Mahommed's, that in my Paradise we shall meet again the pretty girls we have loved in this nether sphere, and espouse them all ; whether individually, or collectively, in distinct and separate portions of bliss, or embodied in one form and spirit with varied attractions, I leave for future consideration. The latter, perhaps, would be most conducive to the peace and unanimity of the domestic hearth.

But, hurrah ! Mars armipotent beckons to the field, and Venus, no longer Victrix, must strike her silken flag of dalliance. I am gazetted ! “ Lieutenant Blake, from the Hereford regiment of Militia, to be Ensign in the 52nd, or Oxfordshire regiment of Light

Infantry." Bravo! bravissimo! Ah! let Cobden and Elihu Burrit broach their peace doctrines, and twine their sandy rope of universal brotherhood round the ever-shifting mass of humanity, antagonistic in principle and discordant in material, but still there is something all-absorbing in the excitement of glorious war—soul-elevating in the clash of arms: and whether it be "the divinity that stirs within us," or the impulse of the fiend, urging us on to the work of destruction, the effect is still the same; for, if a man have but a heart as big as a hazel-nut, it is sure to expand with a throb of triumph on the field of battle.

A few days before I left Rochdale, Foley came into my room, and said, in his usual playful manner:

"Percy, my boy, I have something to say to you, if you promise not to call me out, for you Irishmen are always taking the bull by the wrong horn."

"My dear colonel," I replied, "the promise

is so utterly needless, that I must decline the restriction."

"Well," said my excellent friend, "here is a bit of rag that I found lying idle in the corner of an old pocket-book; it may be of some use to you in your present undertaking, and it is of none in the world to me."

The bit of rag was a Bank of England note for fifty pounds!

"And Rodney," he continued, "Thomas Harley, I mean—for though George is an excellent fellow in the main, he wants every stiver to keep up his dig; Rodney desired me to say that he has a flimsy exactly like it, which you can send your *alter idem*, Tom King, for, any moment you please. He would have sent it by me, but he is deuced shy, to use his favourite term, of Irish pride."

"My excellent friend!" I replied, "I have received a remittance this morning from my father, which is more than adequate to my present requirements; for, after all, I am not

a fellow of expensive habits, putting my three hobbies out of the question."

"Oh! that confounded fiddle!" exclaimed Foley, with a ghastly reminiscence of my Corelli exercises. "Often have I wished you in the celestial regions, singing Hosannas with that thundering savage, Handel."

"Therefore," I resumed, "there is not the slightest occasion for this munificence on the part of yourself and the excellent major, which I beg permission to decline with the deepest gratitude; but if you will give me this little shirt-pin, I'll wear it, as a *souvenir* of your friendship, when I open the ball in the first action of the Oxfordshire Light Bobs."

And thus I parted with the dear old "Apple-greens," a gentlemanly and a brotherly band, which, in all my experience, I have never seen surpassed, and but seldom equalled.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLOATING BIVOUAC.

I joined my new regiment at Ipswich; but, unfortunately, it was a second battalion just embodied, through which I had to work up before I could become effective in the first, which was then in the Peninsula, one of the crack regiments of the Light Division.

I was, however, in a fair way of seeing service somewhere or other very soon; for fresh rumours of war were multiplying hourly, and immense preparations making throughout the kingdom for the coming struggle. We were all strangers to each other in my new

regiment, some having been promoted into it from the line, and others, like myself, appointed to it from the militia. We soon, however, got shaken into our places, and began to feel as if we had long been friends and companions. But it was some time before I forgot the dear old "Apple greens;" not only on account of their own real, sterling worth, but for the association of ideas, dear to my heart, inseparably connected with them.

We had four or five thousand men in garrison at Ipswich, including a fine heavy cavalry regiment of the German legion; and drills, parades, and field days, following each other in rapid succession, led to the very natural inference that foreign service was not far distant. In the midst of all this bustle, however, amusement was not forgotten. Exclusive of plays, cricketing, races, and race-balls, we had a weekly garrison concert in which I was enrolled, amongst other amateurs; and on such occasions when we had played out our programme, seats, and

music stands were removed, and a pleasant dance always concluded the evening.

At length, the order for service arrived ; and one universal feeling of joy pervaded all those young hearts that were now panting for the field. We were not, as yet, acquainted with our destination, but there was a general impression that it was not, at all events, the Peninsula ; a circumstance which, at the time, excited but little regret ; for the paramount importance of the Spanish war was by no means so generally felt then, as it ought to have been, in England.

We marched, at length, for Harwich ; and, by the time we arrived there, the secret of our destination had partly oozed out. It was, in fact, the ill-fated Walcheren expedition, the finest that ever left the shores of Great Britain ; consisting of forty thousand land troops, besides a noble fleet of thirty-nine sail of the line, and thirty-six frigates, with innumerable gun-boats, bomb vessels, and transports.

The object of this armament was the

occupation of Flushing, with the destruction of the French ships, arsenals, and dockyards, at Antwerp ; and, by these means, to create a powerful diversion in favour of Austria, then vigorously pressed by Bonaparte, after his triumphs at Abensburg, Landshut, and Eckmuhl, prior to the decisive battle of Wagram. The period was certainly critical ; and the fortune of that disastrous campaign might have been changed, had our enterprise succeeded, as it ought to have done. But the unhappy dissensions between the Earl of Chatham, our Commander-in-chief, and Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, who commanded the fleet, totally defeated the great object for which this immense armament was got together ; and some thousands of brave soldiers were thus doomed to perish miserably from malaria, in the swamps of that little molehill, on which they had scarcely more than standing room. But let me not anticipate.

This enormous fleet and army, sailed in two

divisions for the coast of Holland, on the 28th and 29th of July, 1809. Our regiment, which formed part of the second division, had been embarked for several days, and we were thus, in some degree, reconciled to the transport, if anything can be said to reconcile sentient beings to so deplorable a state of existence.

Let the reader then fancy, if he can, an old tub of a collier, employed for the last thirty years in the Newcastle trade; ill-built, ugly, confined, inconvenient, adapted for nothing in the world but carrying coals, and altogether inadequate for the purpose to which it was now devoted. The cabin, in which twelve or fifteen gentlemen of liberal education, refined habits, and aspiring hopes were to stow themselves as best they might, was about ten feet by eight, very low, confined, gloomy, ill-ventilated; with an overpowering aroma of tar, rotten cheese, onions, garlic, rusty bacon, salt fish, and a variety of other undefinable smells, enough to drive any

one distracted who possessed olfactory nerves of the least possible sensibility.

Then the various noises that constantly broke upon the ear; the grinding of the rudder at every pull of the tiller-rope, the creaking of bulkheads, the swaying of the mizen boom, the flapping of wet sails, the eternal hawling of ropes, the cries of the sailors, the stamping on the deck, together with the cursing, swearing, scolding, shouting, bellowing, and blaspheming of the captain, (save the mark !) an ignorant, ill-tempered, and insolent sea-going monster. All these formed a never-ending chorus with the kindred horrors of wind and waves, which made every one of us eager to jump at any land-perils or privations that might offer themselves, merely to escape the literal *Inferno*, where we were now "cribbed, cabin'd, and confined;" very little better, I imagine, than so many negroes bound from the Gold coast to that especial land of liberty, the United States.

After striking on a sand-bank off Land-

guard Fort, and bumping there for an hour or two, we at length fairly got to sea, and arrived the following day in the Room-Pot; as the Dutch call that portion of the Scheldt's capacious mouth, wherein Walcheren and its congeries of sub-aqueous neighbours are situated. Here we came to anchor, and preparations were made for landing: the men were paraded on deck; knapsacks, arms, and accoutrements, put in order; and three days' provisions cooked and stowed away in the mess-tins, the havre-sacks receiving the biscuit, and the round wooden canteens the allowance of rum. Nor did the officers disdain these humble accoutrements, but furnished themselves in a similar manner with creature comforts for the approaching bivouac.

The main body of the French army of occupation being concentrated in the fortified city of Flushing, we landed without opposition at the town of Terveer; the small

garrison of which had been driven out the day before by the 71st and 85th, forming a part of the first division of our army. It was the 1st of August, and a beautiful evening, when we got on shore, all eager for our first lesson in actual warfare; and towards nightfall we were marched in the direction of Middleburg, the capital, a couple of miles beyond which we were to take up our alignment.

Our progress, though slow, was fatiguing, from our long confinement on board ship; and the weather being excessively warm, we were soon covered with dust and perspiration. Our advance, however, was uninterrupted by the enemy, till we got nearly within range of the guns at Flushing; and then, occasionally, a spent eighteen or twenty-four pounder would bury itself in the ground, near our line of march; or, after striking the earth, go bounding over the head of the column. Occasionally, also, a party of jolly tars would come along, singing

and huzzaing as they dragged after them heavy guns for our breaching batteries; cracking jokes with our men as we opened out to make way for the "say-horses," as Pat called them: and sometimes, also, a waggon with wounded soldiers would meet us from the opposite direction, on its way to the hospital, at Middleburg; a significant indication of the glory that lay before us.

These little incidents served to beguile the road, till, at length, we arrived at our position; which, like the rest of the island, was a dead flat, intersected by wide ditches filled with water to the brim. The quarter and rear guards being established, under the guidance of a staff officer, and sentinels posted, we bivouacked in open column as we stood: arms were piled, knapsacks unslung, haversacks, mess-tins, and canteens, brought into requisition; and all supped heartily in the highest glee, at the novelty of our situation, for we were still very young soldiers;

sharing good-humouredly our respective prog, and cracking jokes on the round-shot from Flushing, which now and then shattered the stones and branches of the trees in our immediate vicinity. We at length stretched our weary bodies on the sod, and were speedily in the lap of "nature's soft nurse," dreaming of anything but "imminent peril in the deadly breach."

We had not, however, been very long in this happy state of oblivion, when a shout suddenly arose, mingled with oaths, imprecations, and bursts of wild laughter, which effectually broke our heavy slumber, and made us imagine we were beset by ten thousand fiends. My first impression, on coming to my senses, and finding myself, nearly covered with some fluid, the colour of which I could not distinguish, was that our whole division had been suddenly massacred by some diabolical stratagem of the enemy, and that I was actually swimming in a sea of blood.

But the now fast advancing daylight speedily undeceived me, and to my exceeding great comfort, I found that it was nothing but water; in which we were all splashing, floundering and disappearing one after another, in ditches and gullies; whilst every one, as he emerged from the mysterious element, was hailed with shouts of laughter by his reckless companions.

It then occurred to me that the landing had been all a dream, and that we had been wrecked on some horrible shoal or sand-bank, at the mouth of the Scheldt; though I could not satisfactorily account for the presence of trees and bushes, and occasional farm-houses peeping between. At length, with some difficulty, having got out of this unaccountable dilemma, we scrambled on to the main road, which was raised above the surrounding fields; and then the enigma was solved by some of our Dutch guides. The island of Walcheren, it seems, being many feet under

the level of the sea at high water, is surrounded by an artificial embankment: this being cut through in several places by the French, to accommodate us with a bath, after our dusty march; the ditches, with which the whole island is intersected, overflowed their banks, and occasioned the unheard-of catastrophe I have just related.

The pioneers of the brigade were now immediately mustered; and these being assisted by numerous fatigue parties, canals and drains were speedily cut in all directions, to let off our unwelcome visitant into some lower grounds in the vicinity; by which means in a few hours it had so far subsided, that we were enabled to take up our encampment. Meanwhile, under the influence of a brilliant sun, (for the Low Countries,) our dripping garments were dried upon our backs, and we set to, with redoubled energy, to build huts for ourselves, of the young trees in a neighbouring plantation; while some foraging

parties brought in sundry bundles of hay and straw, with which we made excellent beds for the night, though not without many a misgiving of another swimming bath.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES.

THE city of Flushing was now regularly invested by sea and land ; the great energies of "the late" Lord Chatham, as we called him from his dilatory habits, being drowsily devoted to the work, as if the capture of so comparatively unimportant a place had been the sole object of this stupendous enterprise. He was ably seconded by Admiral Sir Richard Strachan ; who, when it came to the push, found himself so deplorably ignorant of the channel of the Scheldt, that the precious

time of his officers and men was frittered away in taking soundings and laying down buoys ; when he ought to have been dismantling the French ships at Antwerp, and conveying us to the proper sphere of action before the enemy had time to improve his defences, and ultimately to baffle the real object of the expedition.

Flushing, however, instead of being masked and passed by, was to be regularly besieged, bombarded, and captured ; before another step could be taken to relieve our friends the Austrians, who were falling daily in thousands before the lightning-speed, and gigantic footsteps of the Man of Destiny. Our engineers accordingly broke ground, and working parties and outlying pickets were the order of the day. Great, indeed, was then the bustle and excitement amongst us ; one half of the besieging force being employed, with very few intermissions of rest, on outlying picket, within pistol-shot of the enemy's tirailleurs ; covering themselves as well as

they could behind bushes and stumps of trees; or stretched in the damp trenches, laying in a stock of rheumatism and ague for the amusement of winter-quarters: the other half was occupied, unarmed and in fatigue dress, in manufacturing fascines and gabions, and filling sandbags for the formation of breaching batteries, and in conveying the same upon their shoulders from the lines to the trenches; getting knocked over in their progress by twos and threes, under what military writers are pleased to call the *galling* operation of grape shot and rifle-balls.

During the siege, the French made frequent sorties in the night-time to retard the progress of the works we were throwing up against the town, which often produced sanguinary combats between the besieged and our outlying pickets; and on these occasions, when anything serious was likely to occur, the whole besieging force was generally turned out to meet contingencies. I shall

never forget my last night in the trenches ; not only from the novelty and excitement of the scene, but from a serio-comic incident, which happily intervened to enliven the monotony of this otherwise disagreeable duty.

Captain Tomkins of ours, who commanded the picket of which I was one of the subalterns, was equally inexperienced in actual warfare with the rest of us ; though, in virtue of his rank, he made great pretensions to generalship in choosing a good position, whence we could observe the motions of the enemy, and shelter ourselves at the same time from those confounded long shots which so startled the oozing courage of Bob Acres.

Our position was in a damp and muddy ditch ; overshadowed on the side next the enemy by a screen of willows, through which we peeped eagerly into the palpable obscure, in expectation every moment of getting a rifle-ball through the brain, or a bayonet

through the body. Fortunately, a party of sailors, who had been employed in dragging up some twenty-four pounders for the seven-gun battery, had forgotten to carry off the main-sail of their long-boat, which they had brought with them for some purpose or other : this we seized upon as a spoil of war ; and laying it under us in the wet ditch, we wrapped it about our legs to make ourselves cozy, while we ate our supper of junk-beef and biscuit, and passed the canteen from one to another ; indulging in occasional reminiscences of feather-beds and savoury viands, with other creature-comforts of the *casa paterna*.

Meanwhile, the scene around was one that kept us effectually on the *qui vive*, in spite of those drowsy indications which nature gave of exhausted strength and weary watching. Every now and then a rifle-ball whistled past our ears ; or a round shot from the ramparts of the beleaguered city came bounding over us,

shattering the willow-trees in its remorseless passage: or a shell winging its way, like a revolving star, in a threatening parabola, and either bursting innocuously over our heads, or plunging into the earth, and scattering on every side fragments of rocks and soil in its fearful explosion.

In our front, at a distance of two hundred yards, lay the enemy's pickets; ensconced, like ourselves, behind hedges, and keeping up a desultory fire on our position; shots from each side telling at intervals, and eliciting a yell, or a groan from the luckless recipients: while, in a distant part of the line, a long and angry roar of musketry would indicate an attack on a working party, or the repulse of a sortie from the town. These agreeable incidents, as my readers may suppose, kept our nervous system in a state of perpetual tension, and made us all long heartily for the dispersion of those deep nocturnal shadows which cast a mys-

terious and threatening aspect over the gloomy scene.

Such was the feverish state of excitement in which we were ; when, about an hour before day-break, one of our advanced sentinels, having discharged his musket and retired, as usual in such cases, informed Captain Tomkins that three huge, dark-looking objects were seen advancing from the town. The matter, indeed, appeared of such serious and pressing emergency that Tomkins, without waiting to sift the accuracy of his information, instantly sent a report to the division head-quarters, that three heavy columns of infantry were advancing in sortie, and the whole line was consequently turned out ; immediate and general action being considered inevitable.

Fortunately, however, for us poor souls, who would have been the first victims of this "untoward event," it proved to be a false alarm ; upon which, General Acland, who was Brigadier of the day, rode out to

the advanced posts, in a towering passion. He instantly ordered Captain Tomkins to parade his picket in front of their position, careless of their exposure to the enemy ; for daylight was then somewhat advanced, and round shot from the ramparts of Flushing were flying about us, too thick to be pleasant ; attracted, no doubt, by the glittering of the muskets, which, in those days, were not "done brown," as at present.

My readers are aware, from what I have already said, that it is sharp work for the eyes on outlying picket, in front of an active enemy ; and that the apparition even of a single individual is apt to draw a dozen shots about his ears. It must, therefore, have been a matter of great moment that could induce a general officer to expose both himself and a whole platoon to the risk of a murderous fire. Tomkins accordingly felt the critical nature of his position, and even had some misgivings about a drum-head court-martial on the spot, for his false

alarm. Judge, then, his astonishment, when the General addressed him with the utmost coolness and deliberation, in the following manner :

“ Captain Tomkins, did you ever hear the story of the three crows ? ”

“ Good gracious, sir ! ” replied the bewildered Tomkins ; “ I never did.”

“ Then, sir, I’ll tell it you,” said the General, taking a pinch of snuff, with all the nonchalance of a hackneyed *raconteur*. “ Once upon a time, Captain Tomkins, a sick man dreamt that he had swallowed a black crow—”

Here an eighteen pound shot from the ramparts tore up the earth at the heels of the General’s charger, and went *ricocheting* over the heads of the picket ; but he proceeded undisturbed as follows :

“ Steady, men ! no movement in the ranks. Though round shot generally kills, it isn’t always sure to hit. This sick man, Captain Tomkins, having told his dream to a friend,

that friend told it to another; with this improvement, however, that his poor, dear, sick friend had actually swallowed a black crow!"

A shell, which followed the eighteen-pounder, at this moment lodged midway between me and the general; and, partly burying itself in the earth, exploded with a loud crash, scattering rocks and rubbish around in all directions.

"Good heavens, sir!" cried Tomkins, venturing to interrupt the story-teller; "there's a man struck down in the ranks!"

"Well, sir!" exclaimed the imperturbable general, "did you never see a man struck down in the ranks, before? Let him be carried to the rear, sir; and listen, if you please, to the sequel of my story. The sick man's friend, who may be compared to your sentry, Captain Tomkins, having told the marvellous tale of the black crow to a greater fool than himself, who may be likened, Captain Tomkins, to you; the latter immediately magnified the wonder

into three black crows, with which he horrified every one that would listen to him.

“Now, had you, Captain Tomkins, had the coolness to inquire into this matter before you had recourse to so serious a measure as turning out the whole line, you would have discovered that the three weighty columns, or black crows, which haunted your imagination, were nothing more than two drunken men and a pig! The men were made prisoners, and the pig was shot by a hungry rifleman. You may now turn in your picket, Captain Tomkins; and I sincerely hope I may never have the pleasure of being on duty with you again, Sir.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROVOST MARSHAL.

THE readers of heroic romance, who are so accustomed, in the pages of Tasso and Ariosto, to rich pavillions and snowy-tented fields, will doubtless be disgusted at my humble description of our Walcheren encampment ; but, bad as it was, I have been in worse since then. Indeed, in all my campaigns I cannot be fairly said ever to have slept under canvass till I went to the gorgeous east ; and there, as my friend Jack Dillon remarked, canvass is cotton. But of this, and of Dillon also, more hereafter.

The weather being fine and warm, very few of our soldiers took the trouble to build huts to shelter them; preferring rather to throw themselves down on the bare earth, when their day's work was done, and sleep in the open air: and though Flushing kept us humbugging for one-and-twenty days with open trenches, there never was a more healthy army during that period, though they certainly paid for it afterwards.

The officers, on the contrary, being more luxuriously inclined, built huts for themselves according to their respective fancies, but without much attention to symmetry, or due order of alignment: the materials which surrounded us on every side, were simply the boughs and branches of trees, interwoven with luxuriant foliage, flowering shrubs, straw, &c., as convenience dictated; architectural design, or tasteful ornament being studied only by a select few, of whom I happened to be one.

In the construction of my hut, chance had

befriended me ; for Tomkins and I having shared between us the sail mentioned in my last chapter, I was enabled thereby to add to my ordinary sleeping hut a splendid verandah, or rather saloon, of canvass stretched horizontally on half-a-dozen upright posts, which effectually shaded us from the sun. I also manufactured a rough sort of table, and two or three seats, out of some old boards that were found for me by my servant, Conolly ; a raw Irish recruit, but a singular compound of cunning and simplicity.

Mr. Conolly, by the way, was rather famous at finding things that nobody ever seemed to have lost, for nobody ever came to claim them ; and though strict orders were issued, forbidding everything in the shape of plunder, and making unpleasant allusions to the provost-marshal, he scarcely ever returned from a rural walk without bringing something or other useful or ornamental in our simple *ménage*. One article, amongst others, was a cuckoo-clock, which he set up in a small hut

that he had built for himself adjoining mine ; and there his great delight was to make it strike all sorts of hours in rapid succession, for the purpose of hearing the "cuckoo ! cuckoo !" and wondering at the mystic spirit that gave it utterance.

My grand marquee soon became an object of general attraction ; and almost every one of ours brought his wine, or his grog there after dinner, to have a smoke and a chat, as at a regimental, or garrison club. Indeed, it was generally denominated "Blake's Club House ;" and even strangers from other regiments gave their friends the rendezvous there, being always sure of a hospitable reception.

As the characters of my new brother-officers opened upon me, I began to like them exceedingly ; for, though I did not find in them quite so much polish as in the dear old "Apple-greens," yet, there was a degree of manly fervour and unaffected good-fellowship about them, which harmonized

delightfully with my own temperament. Many of them were old officers, possessing brevet rank beyond their regimental: amongst others was Sontag; who, though a full colonel in the service, yet, from a restless disposition and a love of change, he had only attained the regimental rank of captain. In the army, more, perhaps, than anywhere else, the proverb holds, that "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

Sontag was an eccentric fellow, and a humourist; very slovenly in his person, and careless in his habits, but excessively touchy on points of dignity or precedence, and particularly stringent in exacting from the private soldier unbounded obedience and respect. He used to sing a droll song for us, occasionally; and one evening, especially, he volunteered his favourite ditty, when we mustered pretty strong:—every man with his meerschaum in hand, and his tumbler of punch before him; replenished, when necessary, from a fine large china soup tureen,

which had been *found* by Mr. Conolly ; he, the said Conolly, standing, on the present occasion, a little in the rear, to be ready when wanted.

Silence being proclaimed by a loud noise of knocking on the table, our worthy colonel began his song ; at the same time gracefully waving the soup-ladle, as Jullien waves his magic baton before the dazzled eyes of his wondering auditors :

I.

Fair Marian sat in her maiden bower,
As the bell of the castle was tolling the hour.
Hi calloo, calisti, calan !
Su-san was a little old man,
Su-san was a little old man.

II.

There came an old trooper riding by,
And at the young maiden he cocked his eye,
Hi calloo, calisti, calan ! etc.

III.

But the wind was high and the wind was strong,
And it blew like a bellows both loud and long :
Hi calloo, calisti, calan ! etc

IV.

Till it tore the trees all up by the roots,

And blew the trooper out of his boots.

Hi calloo,—

“Haw! Haw! Haw!” shouted Conolly, unable any longer to suppress the laughter with which he was bursting.

“You scoundrel!” cried the Colonel, turning round in a rage; “how dare you laugh?”

“Holy Mary!” exclaimed Conolly, “wouldn’t you make the very pigs laugh, Colonel, dear!”

Up jumped Sontag, and rushed at Conolly, to annihilate him with the soup-ladle; but the delinquent, being too nimble for him, slipped under his arm, and ran for his life. The Colonel flew after him, determined, with his own hand, to chastise so gross a breach of discipline; and then ensued a chase royal, which very soon attracted every one to the scene of action: Conolly doubling on his pursuer, and running a figure of eight amongst

huts, or diving under horses' bellies, while the Colonel would occasionally trip against, and overturn, a stand of arms; or upset a cooking-pot, and scatter the fire to the four winds; peals of laughter, and shouts of encouragement, echoing far and near.

Sontag at length overtook the fugitive, close to one of the ditches, and broke the soup-ladle on his bare head: but Conolly sprang to the other side; and the Colonel, unable to control the impetus of his pursuit, tumbled headlong in, while a universal roar of merriment shook the very heavens. We fished out poor Sontag, at last, looking like a river-god with all his sedges about him; but nobody laughed more heartily than he himself did, at the ludicrous exhibition he had made.

I was on picket with the Colonel, a few days after, when he said to me,

"How is it, Blake, that your man Friday hasn't mounted picket with you to-day?"

"I got him excused," I replied, "having

something for him to do in the cleaning way."

"I'm glad of it," said Sontag, with a chuckle. "That will just do; I'll hang him this very evening." Here he began to walk backwards and forwards, rubbing his hands—his usual custom when in a state of excitement, and laughing heartily at the drollery of his own conceptions.

"Well," I observed, "you are the first merry hangman I have ever met with."

"I owe it to the fellow," said Sontag, still laughing, "for the trick he played me the other day. I'll have him before the Provost-Marshal this very evening."

This announcement, I confess, somewhat startled me; for, after all, Conolly's peccadilloes were but trivial, and it seemed a harsh measure of revenge, to subject him to so summary and severe a tribunal.

"Don't be alarmed, Percy my boy," said the Colonel; "'tis all *morvoggá*, as they say in Ireland—nothing but blank cartridge and

sham-fight. Joe Blow, one of my company, who is about the ugliest fellow in the division, will make a capital Provost. I'll dress him up in a wig and cocked hat, and we'll have a regular trial of the delinquent—that is, if you have no objection.”

“Not the least in the world,” I said, “indeed, I think a little fright may do him good, and save him, perhaps, from the Provost-Marshal in reality.”

“Not a doubt of it,” returned Sontag, who laughed like a child, at his anticipated fun. “We have a quiet, retired picket-house, here, if you will only send for him.”

“I expect him out in the evening,” I said, “with some things from camp, and I will then submit him to your discretion.”

Accordingly, about night-fall, Mr. Conolly ventured to come out to the trenches—for he was almost as great a coward as Davis himself; and, while he was actually describing a nice little copper skillet he had found by the road-side, that would do beautifully to

stew mushrooms in, a corporal and a file of the picket marched up and summoned him to appear before the Provost-Marshal.

A deadly paleness overspread poor Connolly's face: his limbs shook as if he had the palsy; and, falling on his knees, he besought me, with tears in his eyes, to save him from the clutches of that awful functionary.

"Oh! masther. Percy! masther Percy!" he exclaimed; "for your mother's sowl, don't let me go before the Provo."

"I cannot prevent it," I replied. "He has his orders from the Commander-in-chief direct, and no one can interfere with him."

Thus, finding I couldn't assist him, he was compelled to accompany his guards, weeping all the way, and supplicating them to let him escape. At length, he was ushered into a room that was dimly lighted by a single candle; where the Provost-Marshal was seated, with a cocked hat, and a tow wig, manufactured for the occasion; while, on each side of him were ranged four or five

of the picket, dressed up as executioners, with cat-o'-nine-tails and pioneers' axes in their hands. The door and windows were crowded with others, who had stolen out of the trenches to see the fun ; and, altogether, it had a dismal look, calculated to frighten a culprit of stronger nerves than poor Conolly, who fell on his knees the moment he entered.

"Stand up, and give an account of yourself," said the judge, with a stern voice.

"Yes, your honour," replied Conolly, in a whimpering tone, as he obeyed the order.

"I understand you have a cuckoo-clock in your possession," said the judge.

"Is it me, Sir?" said Conolly. "Where on earth should I get such a thing as a cuckoo-clock, your honour?"

"That's what I want to know," said the judge, with a frown and a squint, of the most ominous description.

"Faix, then," returned Conolly, "it's my-

self that can't tell you. Sure I never seen sich a thing in all my life."

"Do you see these cats and hatchets?" demanded the judge, with a terrible glance.

"Ye—ye—yes, my Lord," stammered the culprit, as they were flourished before his eyes.

"Then I ask you, by virtue of the oath you have taken," shouted the judge, "or woe be to your sinful body, how you came by that cuckoo-clock."

"Then it's from a pedlar I bought it one day, Sir," replied Conolly.

"Where was that?" demanded the judge.

"Forenint the dure of the masther's tint," replied Conolly.

"That's false!" cried the judge, with a frown. "Pedlars are not allowed to enter the camp."

"Sure, 'twas outside the camp I bought it, your honour," said Conolly.

"You just now told me," cried the judge,

"that it was at the door of your master's tent. Did you take the tent outside with you, then?"

"Av coorse I did," replied Conolly, getting bewildered in his cross-examination.

"What did you do with the tent after that?" demanded the judge.

"I left it where it was," said the culprit; "what would you have me do with it?"

"And what did you do with the clock?" demanded the Provost-Marshal.

"I tuk it home with me," said Conolly.

"Then the tent was in one place," observed the judge, "and the clock in another."

"Jest so, Sir," replied the culprit.

"And where were they both, when you got home?" asked the judge.

"They were both together," replied Conolly.

"Was that inside, or outside, or on both sides of the camp?" demanded the judge, with a thundering voice.

"Then the divil a one ov me can tell," said Conolly. "Your honour has so bothered me intirely, that I don't know whether I'm standin' on my head or my heels, this blessed minute."

"Oh, it's a clear case," said the Provost-Marshal. "'Tis flat forgery and *felo-de-se* by the 99th article of war, which declares that he who steals a clock, especially a cuckoo-clock, is to receive five hundred lashes."

"Oh, murther!" cried Conolly, lifting up his clasped hands. "I wish I was up to my neck in the bog of Allen."

"The same article," continued the judge, "further declares that he who would steal a clock, wouldn't hesitate to steal a cock."

"Is it me, your honour?" cried the too conscious Conolly. "Divil resaive the cock did I ever steal in all my born days, your honour."

"What is that peeping out from the breast of your great coat?" demanded the judge.

Every eye was directed to the spot indicated by the sharp-witted Joe Blow, where the head of a fine young cock was just visible, peering out between two of the wide-set buttons of Conolly's great coat. But, as if this was not enough, the moment chanticleer saw the light of the candle, he set up a lusty crow, that made the hall of justice ring again.

"There's evidence against you, you thief!" exclaimed the judge, shaking his tow wig, and cocked hat. "You, and the cock, shall go to pot together; so, down on your marrow-bones, and say your Padheren-Avy."

"Oh! the Lord have mercy on my sinful soul!" cried poor Conolly, in his tribulation. "Oh, colonel dear, won't you pray for me, and you peeping in there at the window. Sure av I did laugh at the song, every one else did the same; an if you tumbled into the ditch, 'twasn't all along ov me, but the fault of your own bandy legs."

"Silence in the court!" cried the judge, "while I pass the sentence."

"On the neck ov your mother's sowl!" cried the culprit, "give me a long day, your honour?"

"Do you see that beam over your head?" sternly demanded the judge.

Conolly cast a rueful glance up at the roof-trees.

"In five minutes more," said the judge, "you'll dangle at that beam, where you may dance upon nothing and show your steps to the mob, before you go out of this dirty world."

Totally overcome by this direful sentence, poor Conolly fell groaning upon the floor; but, at this critical juncture, the farce was suddenly cut short by a dozen shots outside the picket-house, while a sentry shouted, in a voice of thunder, 'Sortie! Sortie! Picket, turn out!'

"What on earth is a salt-eel?" cried Conolly.

But, before he could have an answer, judges, executioners, and spectators, were tumbling over each other in headlong haste to get into the trenches; where, in three minutes more, we were wrapt in a blaze of musketry, that drove Conolly, and his cuckoo-clock, totally out of our heads.

It was, in fact, a sortie of some consequence; the object being to destroy one of our breaching batteries, and spike the guns, but it totally failed: for though, in consequence of the darkness, there was more noise than mischief in the affair, the enemy were repulsed as day began to dawn, and driven back, leaving about twenty killed and wounded behind them, on the field.

When all was quiet, I returned to the picket-house, where I found poor Conolly in a paroxysm of fever, from the double fright he had undergone. I sent a fatigue party with him immediately to the hospital, whither he went raving of the salt-eel and the Provost-Marshal; and it was not till his head was

shaved and blistered, and the doctor had put him through a course of black draughts and croton-tiglum, that he was at length restored to his senses. The joke was a severe one, but it served as a salutary lesson, for Mr. Conolly never after got into the clutches of the Provost-Marshal.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUTCH VROW.

ONE of the standing jokes of that very "slow" period, of which I am now treating, was that Lord Chatham could never after hear the subject of his expedition broached without a flushing in the face; and the following epigram, written on the occasion, gives too true a picture of the ridiculous state of affairs, to claim even the merit of poetical invention.

" Lord Chatham, with his sabre drawn,
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan ;

Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham."

But though slow, and by no means sure, seemed the maxim of our commanders, nothing could surpass the zeal, energy and enterprising spirit of the troops composing this noble expedition. The same animus inspired both men and officers; and in spite of the disheartening circumstances under which they laboured, the universal feeling was, like that of the gallant Scotchman, how they could best kill "twa at a blow!"

So many years had elapsed since the troops of England had seen anything like active service, and the expedition comprised so many raw soldiers, who had never seen a shot fired in anger, that much could not fairly be expected from their efforts in this their first campaign. And yet the facility with which they comprehended and performed its various and unwonted duties was truly wonderful; trenches being dug, fascines and

gabions manufactured, and batteries erected, with the utmost excellence and rapidity, by men who, ten days before, had never seen or heard of either one or the other.

By these means the siege works soon made a rapid progress; the line of circumvallation was completed, several formidable batteries erected, and our battering train nearly got into position. Our incessant activity kept us all in excellent health and spirits; and the vicinity of Middleburg, though we were not allowed to partake of its amusements, afforded a constant supply of little luxuries, to enable us to relish and eke out our rations. Being the only one in the regiment who spoke French with any fluency, I was generally requested by my brother officers to be their purveyor, when camp supplies began to fail; a piece of service which, of course, I always rendered with pleasure.

The last time I paid a visit of this kind to Middleburg, before the surrender of

Flushing, was on a fine afternoon about the middle of August. Followed by my two fatigue-men, with hampers on their backs, I passed the Stadthaus, and strolled down the Vlessingue-Strasse, and alongside one of the canals that intersect the city; looking out for a new dealer, the last one not having supplied us with good articles. I had not long to search before I came to a shop of a very tempting appearance indeed; being beautifully painted and varnished inside and out, and displaying in its crystal windows almost every commodity of which I was in want.

There was, however, one object of paramount attraction, that fixed my attention more than all the others: this was a very pretty little Dutch-woman, with eyes like black beads, a smart French cap on her glossy round head, and a coquettish air that did not seem at all racy of the swamps and quagmires of her native soil. I hope the indulgent reader will pardon this fresh instance of infidelity, as he will doubtless

call it ; but there is something so fascinating, so mesmeric, as it were, in the smile of a pretty woman, that no man who is once placed within its maddening focus can thenceforward be looked upon as an accountable being.

In this predicament I felt myself, as I entered the shop where my little Dutch-woman was serving behind the counter, assisted by a shop-boy. To my great delight, she spoke French fluently, and it sounded from her lips like music to my ears ; for I never cared much about German, either high or low, with its soapy pronunciation, and its alphabet of spiders and grasshoppers.

I addressed myself immediately to my task, while she evinced equal assiduity in assisting me ; and between us, my hampers were speedily filled, and my purse emptied, whole volleys of smiles, and volumes of honied words and expressions being, in the meantime, interchanged between us.

When the bill was made out and duly paid and receipted, Madame (for she told me she was married, though I persisted in calling her Mademoiselle), asked me if I would like some refreshment, and invited me into a small parlour behind the shop, which was the most singularly neat and clean little compartment of domestic comfort I had ever seen. The floor was scrubbed as white as snow, being uncarpeted through the heat of the weather ; the stove and fire-irons shone like silver, the mahogany tables, chairs, and chiffoniers were polished to a painful degree of lucidity, while an equally transparent cabinet, made of some curiously variegated foreign wood, was literally crammed with little plates, dishes, tea-pots, cups, saucers and cream jugs, with a thousand other little articles more curious than useful, of the most rare and delicate china, and the most singular varieties of shape and pattern.

My fair hostess seemed to enjoy my sur-

prise at what I saw ; and, having rung for refreshments, she sat down beside me on the sofa, without any affectation of prudery or bashfulness ; but also without the slightest appearance of unbecoming freedom, or indiscretion. We were, in fact, like a brother and sister, who had accidentally met after a long separation.

Sweetmeats, confectionary, and coffee were speedily served ; the latter without sugar, in excessively small, transparent China cups, encased in silver fillagree. Though it was the purest Mocha, I begged for a little sugar, which she immediately produced, with a smile at what to her, at least, was an innovation : for the Dutch drink coffee incessantly, without any saccharine admixture ; the ladies sitting with their feet on little charcoal stoves, and the gentlemen with the eternal meerschaum in their capacious mouths.

When the coffee cups were removed, they were succeeded by one of those delicious

liqueur cases for which the Low Countries are famous. It was a square box of sandalwood, inlaid with ivory, highly polished, and diffusing around a delightful aroma. It was lined with crimson velvet, and held four small decanters, curiously carved and gilt; one containing *crème de noyau*, another *parfait amour*, and a third *huile de Venus*; what was in the fourth I cannot now recollect; for the ineffable smile my fair hostess bestowed upon me, as we touched glasses, drove everything else out of my head but her own perfect beauty.

And it really was beauty of the highest order: a Grecian contour, a clear bright forehead, a sparkling complexion, pouting lips, and finely modelled chin, with a matchless bust, and a full round form, that would have exceedingly puzzled any of our P.R.B's to twist into their diabolical lines of beauty. All, in fact, was perfect except one particular feature: what that was I'll tell you presently; but never, my dear reader, as long as

you live, look into the mouth of a Dutch-woman.

I myself was a novice at the time, and took everything for granted that only offered a fair outside. It is true, that my hostess had hitherto kept her lips, as it were glued together, allowing her words to slide out through the smallest possible aperture: this I thought was rather too niminy-piminy; but it was an imperceptible flaw in the koh-i-noor, and vanished amidst the blaze of her loveliness.

I felt I cannot tell how; it must be that I was then and there, for the first time in my life, struck with all-consuming, all-absorbing love. I pressed her delicate fingers, which gently returned the pressure; I drew that dear little hand to my lips, while her face and neck were suffused with blushes. Like Rory O'More, I "looked in her eyes that were beaming with light." Nay, in imitation of that rollicking gentleman — pardon, dear reader, if I shock the unspeakable purity of

your delicate mind—but I feel myself, so to speak, at an imaginary confessional : whether I shall ever be brought to one in reality depends on the success of Cardinal Wiseman ; but, as I said, in imitation of that rollicking countryman of mine, I was on the point of—

Fortunately, there was a little glass window in the partition, through which we could see what was going on in the shop ; and just as I was on the point of desperately snatching a kiss, an elderly gentleman entering the front door, my lovely hostess started up, exclaiming —“ *Bon Dieu ! c'est mon mari !*”

Ah ! that fatal exclamation ! In all my previous trials and disappointments, my real, internal, heartfelt happiness had never been tampered with before ; but in uttering these few insignificant words, my sweet hostess had inadvertently opened her mouth, and displayed between those ruby lips of hers, two frightful rows of stunted, black, discoloured—tobacco pegs ; I can call them nothing else, in short. In a moment, they dispelled my

celestial delusion, and called up hideous images to my mind; which Holbein or Fuseli would have delighted in transferring from the palette to the canvass, could their genius have attained the full amount of my horror.

I had heard of women who were said to be beautiful in spite of their teeth, but I rejected the theory as untenable. I thought of strange, repulsive images, and I could think of nothing else; of painted sepulchres—of green mossy banks, that so often spring from a putrid source—of skeletons clothed with transparent flesh. I thought of the apples of the Dead Sea, and of those waxen representations of plague, which I had then read of, and have since seen in such perfection at the Boboli Palace (if I mistake not) at Florence. In the midst of these horrible images, I was presented to "*mon mari*."

"Monsieur," said my fair hostess, "has been kind enough to lay out ever so many guilders in refreshments for the camp."

"I am much obliged to him," said *mon mari*; "but don't you think, my dear, he looks ill, or frightened at something or other?"

"Poor young gentleman!" she replied, "I fear he is going to have an attack of our terrible endemic."

"Well," said the elderly gentleman, "he does look as if he was going to have the cold fit."

"I have it already," I replied, "and with a vengeance too."

"I was not wrong then," said the elderly gentleman, as he handed me a paper of bark: "chew this, my dear Sir," he continued, "on your way back to camp, and you'll get over it."

I took my leave at length, and marching off with my fatigue men, arrived in due time at our encampment.

And now arose a difficulty which I had never anticipated. In the midst of my delirium, I had lost the memorandum of my

various commissions, and it was in vain I strove to recollect its items. I could think of nothing but Dead Sea apples, and painted sepulchres. What was to be done? I might, it is true, have asked all my friends to come and select their own; but some were on picket, some were foraging, and some were visiting friends in other parts of the alignment; so, in my anxiety to get rid of my cargo, I sent it off hap-hazard, and made of course a variety of blunders. To one who wanted a pound of coffee, I sent an equal quantity of snuff; to another who was dying for a Stilton cheese, I sent a roll of tobacco, and so on: all these mistakes were soon rectified amidst laughable explanations, but one was nearly productive of mischief.

Arthur of our's had given me money to buy him a telescope; but this, in the confusion of my mind, I sent to another, supplying him instead with a bottle of brandy. Now, poor Arthur was terribly "addicted," as the saying is; and, taking my innocent

mistake for a deliberate insult, he sent me a message. Some of my friends would have had me pooh-pooh the affair; but, at that time, there was no such thing as a newspaper correspondence to patch up a hole in a man's honour; so I went out with him, but with a firm determination not to return his fire.

Fortunately for all parties, Arthur's hand was very unsteady from his overnight's potations: instead of me, therefore, he hit his own second, as he was gracefully retiring from the line of fire; and hit him, too, in that part of the human frame which is said to have formerly so much redounded to the honour and profit of the learned Taliocotius. As soon as he had performed this notable exploit, Arthur turned on his heel and marched off, declaring that his honour was satisfied; while I took deliberate aim at a crow, that came sailing along over his head, and brought it down, in spite of my laughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOMBARDMENT.

BUT now, at length, the tug of war came on, at least for the poor inhabitants of Flushing, which we bombarded for three or four days, by sea and land, with four or five hundred pieces of ordnance, more or less ; exclusive of Shrapnell-shells and Congreve-rockets, which had just then come into fashion, and made a pretty flare-up in the night, to the admiration of all unconcerned spectators.

The Shrapnell-shell, or, as it is technically called, spherical case shot, has this advantage over the ordinary canister, that, whereas the latter explodes immediately on leaving the gun, and spreads its bullets so wide that few of them will take precise effect at three hundred yards, the Shrapnell may be thrown two miles, and then explode within a calculated distance of the object to be attained ; scattering, with murderous effect, not only its own splinters, but the two or three hundred musket balls with which it is charged. These terrible missiles were principally directed, at Flushing, against any uncovered bodies of the enemy's troops who might have been within range ; and who were sorely galled and sadly puzzled by such excellent rifle practice, as they deemed it to be, from an outlying picket a couple of miles distant from them.

The Congreve-rockets were equally new and astounding to the garrison of Flushing, but infinitely more destructive. The tremendous rush with which they soared aloft,

and the trail of flame that marked their course during the night, must have had a terrifying effect on the trembling inhabitants of that doomed city : but when they saw their pointed tubes irrevocably fixed wherever they struck, pouring forth innumerable jets of fire that ignited everything inflammable within their terrible compass, they must indeed have looked upon them as a rare production of that infernal gentleman, who, according to Milton, astonished the angels themselves with the invention of gunpowder. Such, in fact, was the horror they occasioned, that General Monnet, the French commandant, made a formal remonstrance to Lord Chatham against their being used in the bombardment ; which, however, his Lordship paid very little attention to.

While these, and the ordinary shells and guns of every calibre, kept up an incessant fire upon Flushing from the land side, our numerous ships of war assailed it on the sea-face, which extended the whole length of

the city ; pouring in a perpetual succession of broadsides, with showers of shells from the bomb-ketches, whose repeated explosions among the streets and houses increased the infernal din, and materially added to the wide-spread destruction. The result was, that this most unfortunate city was knocked all to atoms, to the consternation and dismay of its helpless inhabitants, with whom we all the while expressed repeated wishes to be on the most friendly terms ; though, doubtless, as they crept from the fiery torrent, into holes, and cellars, and bomb-proofs, they uttered curses, both loud and deep, at such overtures of friendship.

Meanwhile, we, who were committing all this havoc, suffered literally nothing from the fire of the enemy, which was speedily silenced : but, with the unreflecting curiosity of youth, I fear we rather enjoyed the novelty and martial splendour of the bombardment ; especially as we were too far off to witness its frightful results to the inhabitants, or to

hear the groans and shrieks of the mutilated and wretched sufferers.

Certain it is, that, during the night, we all crowded upon the roofs of the neighbouring farm-houses, to witness the star-like progress, and the final bursting of the shells: the rushing flame of the Congreve rockets, and the numerous fires that were constantly breaking out in every part of the town, shooting up their spiral volumes of smoke and flame to heaven; while, at intervals, the dreadful explosion of a magazine would send a thrill of mingled pity, awe, and admiration through our hearts. One casualty we particularly lamented, which was occasioned by an unlucky shell, that carried off the belfry of the principal church, and effectually silenced its beautiful chimes, which had often soothed our angry spirits in the trenches with a celestial melody; very different, indeed, from those triple bob-majors that make such a savage disturbance in this unmusical island of ours.

The town, at length, becoming too hot for the garrison, they hung out the white flag, and beat the *chamade* on the ramparts. After a parley, they agreed to surrender with the honours of war ; and the principal gateway was put in possession of Pack's gallant corps, the 71st, till the definitive treaty should be signed by the respective commanders-in-chief.

In the afternoon of the same day, three or four brother officers and myself, urged by an unconquerable curiosity to see the town in its actual condition, walked out of the trenches ; and made the best of our way, through ruined farm-houses, and over the dead bodies of once jolly-tars, fatigue-men, and out-lying pickets, in all stages of decomposition, till we arrived at the Middleburg gate. There, with some difficulty, we obtained permission to enter, from Captain Law, the officer in command ; who cautioned us, however, to avoid carefully anything that might lead to a misunderstanding with the French troops, still in possession

of the arsenal, and other strong positions in the town ; and espeaially to shun the Dutch, who were fearfully exasperated against the English, for what they deemed a cruel and wanton destruction of their families and property.

Thus warned, we proceeded with due circumspection through streets and lanes, blocked up with fragments of ruined houses, broken furniture, and shattered property of every description ; sad tokens of the destructive nature of our cannonade. Very few human beings were visible ; for the frightened inhabitants had not yet ventured out of their hiding holes, and the French troops were kept close in their quarters, until the final arrangement took place.

Occasionally we met a small picket, or working party, carrying ammunition, or dead bodies, from one place to another ; and whether it was that they had not shaved for a week, or were terribly gruelled at the idea of surrendering to the "*sacré G—d dems*,"

as they very politely called us, they all looked as savage as if they could have eaten us without salt.

It being near the end of August, the weather was excessively hot ; and the stench and dust arising from the smouldering ruins, added to the fiery nature of the atmosphere, caused a most intolerable thirst amongst us ; which, with all our prying, we could not perceive any feasible mode of allaying.

" Surely," said one of our party, " all the wine shops cannot be blown up, or knocked down by that confounded bombardment ; if we could only light upon some good fellow now, that would show us the way to one."

" I am absolutely suffocating," I exclaimed, as my tongue knocked like a piece of dry leather against the roof of my mouth, " and would willingly give a guinea at this moment for a bottle of sour wine."

" Yonder's a Dutchman," cried Captain O'Driscoll, " standing on a bridge, and spitting into the water for want of better employment.

Let us ask him the way to the nearest tavern."

Here, however, a difficulty occurred; for on comparing notes, not one of us, we found, could speak a word of Dutch.

"Never mind," said Jack Crossley, an old subaltern, who fancied himself a particularly clever fellow; "come on, my boys; I'll soon make the Dutchman understand what we want."

"How so?" demanded we, *una voce*.

"By speaking broken English to the fellow," replied Crossley, with an air of undoubting confidence.

We all laughed at the absurdity of the idea. Captain O'Driscoll, being the senior officer amongst us, said the Dutchman would take it as an insult, and we should get into a scrape in consequence.

"No such thing, my dear fellow," said Crossley. "I have always found broken English a sort of universal language both with Dutchmen and Frenchmen; and I'll bet

you a rump and dozen, he will understand me perfectly well, though I cannot speak a word of Dutch to him."

"Done!" said O'Driscoll, "I'll take your bet, just to show you what a *budhgai** you're going to make of yourself."

Anxious to witness the decision of a bet, which now began to interest us for more reasons than one, we proceeded in a body towards the Dutchman; who, seeing us approach, folded his arms as he leaned against the parapet of the bridge, and reconnoitred us with an air of mingled *insouciance* and defiance.

He was a fine-looking man, in a sort of undress uniform, with a huge pair of moustachios, and a humorous twinkle of the eye, that seemed to encourage Crossley in his attempt; for he went boldly up, and addressed him in the following jargon, which very much deranged the gravity of our party.

* An Irish expression of ridicule, expressive but untranslatable.

"You standy where get eaty, drinky, brandy, cum watery wine-o?"

If this specimen of Crossley's universal language excited our merriment, the answer to it threw us into convulsions of laughter.

"Och ! to be sure then I do, your honor," promptly replied the supposed Dutchman. "You've only to go down the *kay* there, to the 'Orange Boven,' where you'll find the best of aiting and dhrinking, and good dhry lodgings to boot, whether you're a man or a horse."

"There !" said Crossley, with a look of triumph that very much increased our laughter ; "I told you that every Dutchman understood broken English."

The man, on inquiry, proved to belong to the Irish Brigade, in the service of Napoleon ; some companies of which had been detached from Antwerp, to do duty at Flushing during the siege. My readers, perhaps, know that this gallant and distinguished corps was exclusively composed of

Irishmen, whose religious scruples and disabilities had sent them into voluntary exile from their native land, to avoid the pressure of laws, which now happily no longer exist : laws that had long doomed some of the best blood of Ireland to be shed in the service of France, Spain, and Austria ; and had given to whole generations of Blakes and O'Donnells the wealth and honours of every country but their own. As the reader also knows that an ancestor of mine was one of the original members of this distinguished body, I felt a more than ordinary sympathy for my poor countryman ; and, pressing a Spanish dollar into his hand, I passed on with my comrades to the "Orange Boven."

This patriotic sign, which had lain hidden during the domination of the French, amongst the archives of the cautious inn-keeper, was hung up by him the moment the town surrendered ; while its predecessor, "Napoleon le Grand," was ignominiously

bundled into the coal-hole. The joy of Mynheer will, therefore, be readily surmised, on seeing, for the first time in his life, some English officers under his hospitable roof; and he accordingly treated us to everything excellent in the way of refreshment, duly charging for the same six times as much as he would have dared to demand from the French, during their day of power.

In a week after this, the besieging force was drawn up on a range of sandhills, extending in a northerly direction from the walls of Flushing; the original foundation on which this artificial island may be said to have been constructed. In their presence the garrison marched out, with the honours of war; and I felt, in common with my brothers-in-arms, a justifiable triumph in seeing six thousand Frenchmen lay down their arms at our feet, and embark, sorrowfully enough, Heaven knows, in transports, to be conveyed to England. Some, doubtless, were destined for Norman Cross; and,

as the idea struck me, I felt a pang of remorse and sorrow, at having so speedily forgotten my still admired Harriet Sibley.

But, alas ! our triumph ended here. For, between the utter ignorance, the tardy proceedings, and the scandalous dissensions of our naval and military commanders, Antwerp was forgotten, the power and honour of England were alike overlooked, and the troops, who would have nobly served their country on the battle-field, were doomed to perish ingloriously by lingering disease ; while their country looked on, as if spell-bound, at this fruitless sacrifice of several thousands of lives, and this shameful expenditure of many millions of pounds sterling !

Some of our regiments were marched into quarters, at Terveer and Arnemuyden, and others at Middleburg, until it should be decided what was eventually to be done with them ; for they were evidently poor Lord Chatham's great embarrassment. Willingly would he have seen them all comfortably

laid at the bottom of the *Room-Pot*, could the thing be done without any trouble ; but, as this was not feasible, he took the next best course, and went off to England, leaving them to get out of the mess the best way they could.

He was received by his brother imbeciles, the ministers of the day, as Noodle might be supposed to receive Doodle, at the court of King Arthur, under similar circumstances: they embraced, danced a rigadon, and washed their hands of so disagreeable an affair altogether ; declaring to John Bull, when he began to grumble, that it was all right, and he knew nothing at all about the matter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WALCHEREN AGUE.

Meanwhile, our hospitals at Middleburg, Flushing and Terveer, were filling daily, hourly, with burning and shivering wretches ; wasting, pining, and dying, under the influence of a deadly disease, and the inadequacy and ignorance of our medical staff.

It was pitiable to see the strongest and finest men in this devoted army, for they were the first to fall victims to the insidious malady, emaciated, pale, and visibly withering away ;—their teeth chattering, their limbs

shaking, as if their noble spirits were quailing at the approach of the grim tyrant, whom they had so often braved in the field: while, with faint and quavering voices, they called for more blankets, in the vain hope of imparting a little warmth to their ice-stricken frames; or, in the paroxysm of the hot fit, screaming for drink to allay the quenchless thirst that was racking their vitals, and shrivelling up their parched and burning throats.

I kept up for a long time, owing, principally, to my great animal spirits, and active habits; but, at last, I felt the insidious approaches of the foe, and prepared for a formidable attack. My regiment being quartered in Middleburg, I was billeted on an old Scotch gentleman, who had been so long in the country that he had very nearly forgotten to speak English; and, during my illness, I was often amused at the dialogues that ensued between him and Conolly; the Irish phra-

seology of the one, harmonizing beautifully with the Anglo-Dutch of the other.

This canny old Scot, however, made me very comfortable. I had a fine light airy room, on the ground floor, nicely furnished, and scrupulously clean; the floor being as highly-polished as the tables and chairs, while on each side of the window, externally, was fixed a looking glass, by which I could see every individual coming up and down the street, without stirring from my chair inside.

But, my greatest luxury was a handsome French bedstead, with elegant curtains, depending from a lofty gilt canopy, affixed to the wall. The bed itself was a huge mountain of feathers, in which I sank so deep, that I disappeared altogether from the wondering eyes of Conolly, as he laid over me a sort of second bed of beautifully quilted silk; under which I lay, as he said, like a crow in a clover field.

This was such a change from the bed of earth on which I had been stretched for so

many weary hours during the siege, that the whole night I could not sleep a wink from absolute enjoyment.

But I soon got tired of my delicious bed, and heartily wished myself back once more on the cold earth of my old encampment ; where my blood flowed in a genial current, and health, strength, and activity enabled me to spurn with contempt all cares that flesh is heir to. The very morning after I had entered my cozy billet, when I sat down to breakfast, I began to loathe my tea ; and as I pushed the cup and saucer from me with unaccountable dislike, I observed that my finger nails had all turned as blue as indigo. Conolly, who had also observed the dismal symptoms, exclaimed in a voice of condolence :—

“ Masther, honey, you’re in for it.”

“ In for it !” I repeated.

“ That same, Sir,” replied Conolly. “ You’re going to have a fit ov the shakes. That’s just the way the men are seized in the hos-

pital, and they're dying by dozens there every day."

In a few moments after, I felt an unwonted chill creeping all over my frame. Where it commenced I could not say; but from the crown of my head to the ball of my foot, I was speedily reduced to a mass of ice, of living, breathing, sentient ice. The warm current of my blood was suddenly arrested by the finger of a Polar frost; and, within three feet of a blazing wood fire on the hearth, I felt not its influence; nay, when I desperately thrust my hand into the blaze, it pained and burnt, but it warmed me not.

So I made the best of the matter, and tumbled into bed, while Conolly piled blankets upon blankets over me, and heaped huge logs upon the fire; but still I remained cold and frost-bitten in the midst of all. Our surgeon paid me a flying visit, and said I must have patience, for I should soon be able to write a thesis on the philosophy of

contrast. With these enigmatical words he hurried off to his hospital; where six hundred men of our battalion, which had recently marched into Middleburg eight hundred strong, were now lying in as helpless a condition as I was myself.

"Patience and shuffle the cards, then, Conolly," I said, "that's all we have for it," and my voice shook and jibbered between my teeth; while my limbs and body underwent a convulsive *tremolando*, as if the whole anatomy of my frame was falling into countless icicles. "Wheel that table over here, close by the fire-side," I continued, "and put the doctor's stuff within my reach; I'll take it when I can find courage enough to face a dose of salts."

While Conolly was wheeling the table—a sort of writing-table, with two deep drawers in it, close between the head of my bed and the fire-place, something rolled inside of the drawers, and on opening it, he exclaimed with a sort of a grunt:—

"Well, by the powers, I never seen anything like that afore."

"What do you see?" I demanded.

"A dozen eggs," he replied; "fine, fresh ones, too," as he held one between him and the light. "Well, that accounts for the old Dutchman's saying you wor as poor as a church mouse; he has left them for your breakfast, sir."

"Nonsense," I said, in a peevish tone, the invariable attendant of the cold fit. "Besides, he's not a Dutchman, Conolly; he's a Scotchman."

"Dutchman, or Scotchman," responded Conolly; "'tis six ov one, and half a dozen ov another: they're birds of the same feather, and sure the only differ there is betune 'em is, one is spelt with a C, and the other with a D."

I couldn't help smiling at this orthographical discovery, in spite of the icy torments under which I was suffering.

"I have a great mind," said Conolly, "to throw 'em all in the old fellow's face."

"On no account," I said; "for it shows, at least, a kind feeling, if it be not a mistake altogether—but oh, good heavens!" I exclaimed, as a new phase of my disorder supervened.

"What is it, masther Percy?" cried Conolly, in a fright, as he pushed in the drawer with the eggs. "What's the matter wid ye, masther dear?"

"This change is so delightful," I exclaimed, as a gentle glow at length began to pervade my shivering frame; and the frozen horrors of the first fit were gradually disappearing, before the "flattering unction" that ushers in the second.

I think it is Colonel Crocket who so graphically describes the delightful transition he experienced; when, on being almost frozen to death, one night, amongst the lakes and backwoods, he lay down the next morning in a spring of running water, to be dissolved

from his icy fetters. Something equally, if not more delicious, I felt, as kind nature seemed to pour a fluid of reviving warmth through my veins ; which not only restored my original temperament, but soon began to excite my imagination to a splendid luxuriance of castle-building ; in which I drew such pictures of sublunary bliss, as Mahomed himself never surpassed, in his dreamy visits to the Seventh Heaven.

Had it stopped here, it would have been really transcendent : but the fluid, which before was warm and vivifying, became gradually hot and hotter, till it actually began to scald me internally ; while the outer surface of my body was burnt to as dry and arid a consistency as a hot cinder.

Meanwhile, the torrid condition of the flesh began to operate on the mind. My brain was whirling in a countless series of concentric ravings : I was swimming in hot water ; struggling for my life, in boiling oil ; gasping for breath, in a sea of molten lead,

while fiends, of every shape and hue, were skirling along its glistening surface ; flourishing their whips of scorpions over my devoted head, and stunning my ears with fiendish yells, that may find some faint resemblance in the railway-whistle.

It was in vain that I kicked off blankets and bed-clothes ; it was in vain that I begged Conolly to roll me naked in the snow, or to plunge me into an ice-bath. Nothing could avail me, in my hopeless condition : the powers of medicine were set at nought ; Galen and Paracelsus were alike baffled, and no balm could be found for my infernal sufferings in the three hundred volumes of the one, or the *elixir vitæ* of the other.

Nature, at length, came to my relief, when I was on the point of suffocation : my skin, hitherto like shrivelled parchment, became soft and moist ; a gentle perspiration oozed through the pores ; the fluid-fire, which had so long been coursing through my veins, gradually subsided to a tepid heat, and I

went off insensibly into a long and tranquil sleep.

Such was my first attack of the Walcheren ague; and I never, before or since, felt anything like that cruel disease. But though it was, happily, not what Mrs. Quickly calls a "*Quotidian-Tertian*," it was nearly as bad, from the still-impending gloom of anticipative horrors,—for every third morning, as fixed as fate, the blue nails cast a frightful shadow of the coming event.

Thousands upon thousands of fine fellows, who ought, at that moment, to have been combing down the Gallic cock in the Peninsula, were literally floored by this awful disease; for bedsteads could not be found in sufficient numbers, and they lay upon the ground, in the hospitals, in every stage of lingering death.

Our medical men were actually bewildered; for, though they were all skilful enough at bayonet or gun-shot wounds, they knew not how to cope with so insidious an enemy.

They were, moreover, worked off their legs ; till, the Commander-in-chief applying for an increased medical staff, we were inundated with a host of hospital-mates ;—young men fresh from their studies, raw, inexperienced, and presuming ; who killed a great many more, by their wild experiments, than they cured, by their book-learned skill.

I was delivered over to the tender mercies of one of these *alumni* of Apothecaries' Hall ; who put me through more manœuvres than Sir David Dundas ever dreamt of, in the vain hope of discovering the fountain-head of the disease. Solutions of arsenic, and other rank poisons, I recollect, were amongst the *arcana* of his juvenile art. Whether these infinitesimal doses laid the foundation of the Homœopathic system, I cannot say ; but one of his remedies certainly led to an ingenious discovery, similar to one that has long been immensely attractive to the curious and sight-seeing public of this vast metropolis.

My young medical friend, with a view to kill the cold fit instanter, prescribed repeated fomentation of the extremities, on its approach. Conolly, therefore, went out and bought a huge roll of flannel; he then piled logs of wood upon the fire, and hung kettles of water over them, in active preparation to meet the enemy.

Accordingly, when the nails began to assume the cerulean tinge, Mr. Conolly tore off sundry strips of the flannel, plunged them into hot water, and wrapped them, scalding hot, about my legs, feet, hands, and arms;—with many eulogiums, at the same time, on the cuteness of them London chaps, who seemed to know everything, from the construction of a Thames punt, to the inflation of an air-balloon.

With intense assiduity and care, poor Conolly went on fermenting me, as he called it; tearing off a piece of fresh flannel for every change, and, like a true Irishman, poking the one just used into the nearest

hole at hand, which happened to be the deep drawer of the table before-mentioned, in which my good old Scotchman had placed his dozen eggs.

By this process, we were speedily enveloped in an atmosphere of steam, something like the sulphur-baths at the *Lago d'Agnano*, while perspiration rolled down Conolly's face; and the table-drawer, which was close to the huge fire, actually smoked with the vapour engendered therein from the damp flannels.

But, alas! this wondrous remedy was fruitless altogether, as regarded me personally, for the icy-hearted disease bade defiance to the powers of steam; but it led to a result altogether new and stupendous, which far surpassed even the boundless genius of the young conjuror who had medical charge of me.

One morning, after a week's perseverance in the hot water cure, my attention was attracted by a curious sort of fluttering and scratching at the head of my bed; which

puzzled me as much as the spiritual tappings puzzle the *gobe-mouches* of the present day.

Ringing the bell, for Conolly, I desired him to look about for a rat or a mouse, that appeared to be gnawing some of the bed-furniture. He, accordingly, listened for awhile, and, thinking he had ascertained the point of attack, he opened the table-drawer slowly, that he might the more certainly pounce upon the enemy; when, suddenly, with an exclamation of fright, he started back, pointing in terror at the table-drawer.

I looked towards the spot indicated; and, to my utter astonishment, saw a dozen little yellow-bellied chickens hopping up, one after another, on the edge of the drawer, and thence down upon the floor; with a consecutive sort of motion, that certainly bore some resemblance to the convolutions of a "fiery serpent," as Conolly had called it, in his first alarm.

The fright of my poor valet, instead of

being dissipated by the *mot d'enigme*, which was now quite apparent to me, became still more ludicrous than before. Fancying himself beset by a whole desert of "fiery serpents," he fled from one corner of the room to another, in an agony of fright, and bellowing for assistance; while the "unfledged bipeds" hopped after him, with a natural instinct in search of food; fluttering their tiny wings, and jumping over each other's backs, as if they were playing at leap-frog, for our amusement.

The scene, altogether, was so strange, and so irresistibly comic, that I actually roared with laughter to such a degree, that the noise Conolly and I made between us brought in my host and all his family, to see if we were not both in a state of raging frenzy.

"My dear Mr. McCracken," I said, when I was at length able to articulate, "you were good enough to give me a dozen eggs; and I now return the compliment with as many chickens."

The old Scotchman was shrewd enough to comprehend the real state of the case, after a little explanation, and marched off in triumph with his young stock of poultry : but Conolly, to the very last, looked upon it as the trick of some Dutch fiend, to cheat him out of his blessed religion ; and I never could make him understand the mysteries of steam-incubation.

“ You may say what you like, Sir,” said Conolly ; “ but them chickens belong to the ‘ Good People,’ and I’d no more ate one of ’em than I’d ate my own grandfather.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LINE-OF-BATTLE-SHIP.

AT length, when one-fourth were utterly destroyed, and another fourth rendered unfit for service, of the finest expedition that ever left the shores of Great Britain, the wise men who planned it, and who ought to have been duly whipped at the cart's tail for the same, thought proper to bring back the sad remains ; thus verifying the nursery rhyme :

“The King of France, with twenty thousand men,
March'd up the hill, and then—marched down
again.”

Orders were accordingly issued to embark the troops for England, and to blow in the

docks and basins of Flushing ; this being the mighty result of an enterprise which cost England several thousand men, and many millions of money.

The troops were embarked in November, on board the ships of war and transports then lying off Flushing and Terveer, the remnant of my regiment being easily disposed of in the 'Vengeur,' 74 ; and towards the end of that month we bade adieu, with unanimous and infinite satisfaction, to a scene of so much misery and mortification.

"Oh, by the powers !" said Conolly, as he brought my luggage down to the cabin allotted to me, on the main-deck ; "we have got into a fine vessel, now, anyhow ; as much like the dirty ould transport we kem over in, as a pewter spoon is like a silver goblet. Only see what a fine large window you've got in your cabin, Master Percy ; with a beautiful big gun in it, all as clean and as bright as a new pin ; and the Lord be marciful to me ! if there isn't a lock and trigger upon it, all the

same as if it was a natural-born musket. Then, the decks are as smooth and as white as a sheet of paper ; with a kitchen, and a fire-place, and mess coppers, all big enough for Fune-a-ma-cool. Sure, it's wishing I am that our passage may last for a month of Sundays, there's such elegant aiting and drinking goin on, day and night ; and the men are so silent and well-behaved when they're pulling the ropes, you'd think it was the Lord Mayor's drawing-room, or a levee at Dublin Castle ; with the boatswain, there, like the Lord Lieutenant, giving his orders, with a whistle in his mouth——”

Here I cut Mr. Conolly short in his rambling description of the *agréments* of a seventy-four ; and told him he must be on his p's and q's, now that he was in a king's ship ; a piece of advice which he promised to follow to the letter. I did not see him again for four-and-twenty hours, and supposed he was sea-sick, as we were now lying our course with a spanking breeze ; but when he

did make his appearance, he looked terribly chapfallen.

"What's the matter, now," I said, "Conolly? You look as if you couldn't help it."

"And no wondher for me, Sir," replied Conolly. "Tear-an-ages! did any one ever see such a savage place as this we've got into, now?"

"You were all in its praise," I observed, "the last time I saw you."

"I was young and foolish then, your honour," said Conolly; "but I'm wiser and sadder, now, as you say yourself."

"What has happened to you, Conolly?" I demanded, pretty well conjecturing the state of the case.

"Plenty, and more of it, sir," replied Conolly. "First and foremost, I was standing paicefully and quietly yesterday, on a place they call the quarter-deck, when a mighty cross-looking chap, with a cocked hat

on his head, and a long telescope under his arm, suddenly called out :

“Midshipman of the watch !”

“Ay, ay, sir,” said another, jumping down from the Lord knows where, with a little bit of a caubeen on his head, covered with tarpaulin, that they call a sou’wester.

“Here’s a marine adrift,” said the one with the telescope.

“It’s only a young lobster, sir,” said the other, catching a houlst of me by the ear ; “he’s only parboiled as yet, sir,” says he. And with that he lugged me forward to the *fokesal*, as they call it ; and there he let me go, saying, ‘That’s your place, young man : never let me see you abaft the main hatchway again.’”

“I told you, Conolly,” I said, “that you must be very particular in a king’s ship. What happened next ?”

“Well, sir,” replied Conolly, “thinking to make myself useful, when the word was given

- to haul taut the lee braces, I tackled to a rope, along with the rest, and began pulling away, and singing out as they used to do in the transport, 'Yo, heave O, Yo ho—'

" 'Silence, you lubber !' cried the bosen, giving me a crack of a rope on the back ; 'silence, and learn to hold your jaw in a king's ship !'

" Well, sir, myself didn't like to be knocked about, and pulled about in this way, so I gave up pulling and hauling, and sat down on a big cannon to hide my vexation ; when the bosen's mate, just like his master, came across my back with another rope's end, crying out,

" 'Don't you ever dare to sit on a gun, you lubber, in this here ship again.'

" 'I ax pardon, sir,' says I ; 'where am I to sit, then ?'

" 'In lubber's hole, to be sure,' says he with a grin.

" Then I asked a daisent young man, where lubber's hole was, and he pointed to

the top of the mast. So, thinking that was the place fixed for the soldiers to be out of the way like, I climbed up the rope ladders, fearing every moment I'd fall into the sea. But, just as I put my head through a hole in the big flure at the top of the mast, two sailors caught a houl't of me by the ears; and says one, says he,

“ ‘Avast, you lubber! where be you a going to?’ ”

“ ‘I'm going to lubber's hole, sir,’ says I.

“ ‘Then you must pay your footing,’ says the other—‘so fork out!’ ”

“ But I said, I wouldn't pay no footing, for I had only a dollar about me, and that belonged to you, sir. So they caught houl't of me, and tied me up to the rope ladder, legs and arms, like a spread-aigle; and there the villians left me for two mortal hours till at last I was obliged to pay them the dollar to let me go. Well, sir, when I came down, three or four fellows gother about me, and says one, says he :

“ ‘Where did you come from?’ says he.

“ ‘I come down from the ropes, sir,’ says I.

“ ‘What do you call the ropes?’ says he.

“ ‘All them ropes that’s flying about over our heads,’ says I.

“ ‘There’s only three ropes in the ship, you lubber,’ says another; ‘and this is one of ’em,’ giving me at the same time a lick across the back with a rope’s end.

“ ‘And this is another of them,’ said a second fellow, giving me another crack when I turned round to ask the first what he meant by it.

“ Well, Sir, to make a long story short, as the saying is, there I was betune ’em all; and every time I turned round to face one enemy, another behind would give me a crack of a rope’s end, till at last my back was all full of ridges and furrows, like a praty field.

“ But that was cakes and ale to what

happened at night; for when I was fast asleep in my hammock, the villians cut the strings, and down I came, whack upon the deck: faith, I thought every bone in my body was bruck to smithereens.

“Well, Sir, at last I got up, and lay down upon the deck, for fear of another hoist, covering myself up in my blanket, snug and cozy; when one of the invisible devils, for they were no more to be seen than the good people* themselves, let dhrive a bucket of water souse upon me, that wet me to the very skin.

“‘What’s that?’ I said, as soon as I got the water out of my mouth.

“‘That’s a salt-eel for your supper,’ said the villian, as he ran off with his brother scamps, all ready to split their sides with laughing.

“Well, Sir,” continued Conolly, “very little sleep did I get that blessed night, what wid the cutting down, and the salt-eel, and

* Fairies.

the cockroaches that were crawling over my face and into my ears, with their sticky legs and fingers, till daylight; when, just as I was getting into a nice little doze, I heard a rumbling sort of a noise like distant thunder, and a dashing of water about, as if we were going to Davy's locker in earnest. Up I jumped, and opening my eyes, I saw some of the say-going divils hauling a large square stone backwards and forwards on the deck, while others were dashing buckets of water about like mad, and others again, with huge swabs, sopping it up after 'em.

" 'Come here, you lubber,' says one, 'and take a spell at this holy-stone.'

" 'He's a papist,' says another, 'and only believes in holy-water.' With that he let dhrive a bucket, and set me afloat again.

" 'To the divil I pitch ye,' I said, 'for English heretics, that don't believe in holy-stones or holy-water either, till ould Nick gets a houl't o' ye.'

" Well, Sir, off I ran, till the carpenter's

mate, a countryman ov my own, took compassion on me, and gave me a place in his birth, and a breakfast, too, though I spoilt the tay by boiling salt water for it."

Such were the trials of Mr. Conolly in a line-of-battle ship; which, though vastly superior to others in cleanliness and accommodation, is a mode of conveyance by no means a favourite with our troops, who generally prefer the free-and-easy system of the filthy old transport.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WELLINGTON OVER-ALL.

Our passage, fortunately, was a short one, and in due time we were landed at Chatham, where there was an extensive depot. It was with great delight that we once more trod upon English ground; but I had the mortification of going into the sick-list again, from a relapse of the Walcheren ague, a misery which was entailed upon many thousands long after the termination of that pestilential enterprise.

In six or eight weeks, however, after my return from the land of frogs, and frows,

and agues, I felt myself, though still rather weak, well enough to go to mess; and I really did enjoy society once more, after so long a seclusion in my barrack-room, with all its attendant horrors of bark and arsenic, blue nails, shakings, and hot fits.

It being a garrison-mess, many of the members were utter strangers to me; for we had detachments and recruiting companies from several of the regiments then in the Peninsula, where also was my first battalion, in which I had recently become effective. But military men are a gregarious race, by habit, at least, if not from nature, and we were soon intimate enough with one another.

My new companions were, generally speaking, an excellent set of fellows: light-hearted, free from care, and averse to thought; for, though a few of them had seen a little service, the majority were fresh from school, or just released from their mother's apron strings. Our pranks and follies, were, therefore, not of a very sage or prudential cha-

racter ; but they won us no ill-will amongst the inhabitants of Chatham, or its neighbour, Rochester, who looked upon them rather as the ebullitions of unthinking youth, than the indications of depraved or malignant dispositions.

There was, however, one amongst us by no means a general favourite ; who, so far from mingling in our little sprees, seemed to move in a higher sphere, and kept himself rather ostentatiously aloof from our occasionally boisterous merriment. This was Captain F. W. B. A. C. D. Hopkins, or as we called him for brevity, Alphabet Hopkins ; a *sobriquet* which, by no means harmonized with his own notions of self-importance, or the respect that was due to his superior merit and rapidly progressive promotion.

He was a very handsome young fellow, so far at least as regularity of features may be so termed, though devoid of expression ; and of great symmetry and personal grace, mingled however with intolerable conceit and super-

cilious manners, which effectually marred the impression he seemed at all times anxious to make. He was accomplished in the ordinary acceptation of the word ; that is, he had a showy smattering of French and Italian, danced and fenced well, sang, played the guitar, and drew vapid landscapes in water-colours.

But, above all, he was an admirable shot with the pistol ; and, indeed, rather prided himself on the character of a duellist, which he had successfully sustained in two or three rencounters. He had been but recently promoted to a company in the 25th, from the India staff of Sir Arthur Wellesley ; and the ordinary tenor of his conversation was a perpetual ringing of the changes on the Governor-General, the Delhi durbar, the Commander-in-chief, the India staff, and the Bengal artillery.

I was speedily disgusted with the affectation and presumption of this ineffable person ; but fancying that my dislike might have

arisen from prejudice, I did all in my power to conquer it, and even made some overtures towards an intimacy with him. These were received as usual with a supercilious smile, a haughty condescension, and a patronizing air; which so effectually checked my advances, that I very soon left him to the undisturbed enjoyment of his own uperminent position. Evidently piqued at this, he condescended in turn to court my acquaintance; but I received his overtures with a cold disdain which I did not attempt to qualify, and which ultimately stung him into the bitterest animosity.

One evening, after dinner, the orders, as usual, were brought in by our respective orderly sergeants; and as I cast my eyes over the book that was presented to me, a young fellow near me called out:

“Confound it all! I am for a garrison court-martial to-morrow. Blake, my dear fellow, will you take it for me, as I am engaged to go on a pleasant excursion up the Medway?”

"With all my heart," I replied. "Will it be a long affair? Who's to be tried?"

"I'm sorry to say," observed Captain Wallis of the 28th, "that my pay-sergeant is one of the culprits."

"What, O'Flaherty?" demanded another of the same regiment.

"Yes," answered Captain Wallis: "as fine a fellow as ever stepped; but he has unfortunately got himself into a scrape, and is minus in his accounts."

The name at first did not strike me; but on hearing it repeated, with a variety of comments generally of a favourable character, I felt convinced that it could be no other than my poor uncle, whose adventure with the mad bull I trust the reader has not yet forgotten. I had lost sight of him for some years; but his regiment, I now fully recollected, was the twenty-eighth.

The pang this conviction gave me, actually shook my frame, and made me sick at heart:

for, under the most favourable circumstances, the idea of having an uncle in the ranks, in the very same garrison with me, was by no means flattering. But to see that uncle tried as a public delinquent; nay, to be actually one of his judges, compelled by duty, perhaps, to sentence him to a degrading punishment, forced to stand by while he received it, to hear his groans, to see my mother's brother writhing in agony, his noble heart breaking under the atrocious infliction, while he vented reproaches, perhaps curses, against the unnatural nephew who had doomed him to so indelible a disgrace—all these thoughts rushed with the speed of lightning through my brain, and I was compelled to swallow a tumbler of water to prevent me from fainting.

In the midst of my confusion, my eye fell upon Alphabet Hopkins; who seemed to be looking at me with a sardonic grin, as if he was absolutely conscious of what was passing in my mind. Fortunately, I had sufficient command over myself to check the rising

passion that urged me to hurl a decanter at his head ; for it subsequently appeared that he was only enjoying the anticipated pleasure of revenge on the luckless O'Flaherty, who had lost, or made away with, his favourite case of duelling pistols.

In a state of mind that beggars description, I now got up ; and making the best excuse I could to my friend, for not taking his tour of duty as I had promised, I staggered out of the mess-room : nothing, indeed, but the fresh breeze that was blowing pretty strong outside, prevented me from falling to the ground.

I took a few turns in the barrack-yard, till my thoughts had become more settled ; and, having decided on the line of conduct which honour and the claims of kindred called upon me to adopt, I proceeded with a firm and collected mind towards the guard-room, where my uncle was in dur-
ance, and easily obtained admission to his presence.

I found him sitting on the guard-bed, in an inner room, at some distance from the other prisoners ; and leaning in a melancholy mood on a small table, whereon a candle was dimly burning. His tall, athletic figure bent in unwonted humility, his manly and somewhat stern features clothed in sorrow and unavailing contrition, he presented a figure that a lover of high art would be delighted to study for a Samson Agonistes, or a Judas Maccabeus. The strong man was overthrown by the allurements of the syren, the noble fighter was betrayed by the deceitful smiles of fortune.

I sat down by the side of my hapless relative, and took his hand in mine before he was aware of my presence : but when he saw that his unexpected visitor was an officer, he started up with habitual respect ; and carrying his hand to his forage-cap, he stood staring at me with an expression of mingled surprise and curiosity.

“ My dear uncle,” I said, as well as my

emotion permitted, "sit down. I wish to talk with you."

"Uncle!" he exclaimed, in utter amazement.

"Do you not recollect Percy Blake?" I said, taking his hand again, and looking up into his face, with my eyes brimful of tears.

"Percy Blake," he cried, clasping his hands together. "And are you, then, Ensign Blake, of whom I have heard so much, and of whom I have such reason to be proud? Ah! 'tis true," he continued, as he gazed eagerly in my face. "There is the exact image, sure enough, of my poor sister Jane." Then, falling upon the guard-bed, he buried his face in his broad hands, and wept and sobbed as if his heart would burst.

There is something in the uncontrolled passion of a powerful man, that affects us more than the feeble wailings of less muscular persons; and, though not much given myself to the melting mood, except at the well-wrought imaginary sorrows of the novelist,

I could not refrain, on such an occasion, from sharing the grief of my gigantic relative; and for some time we mingled our tears together.

Fortunately, his fellow-prisoners, who were at the other end of the room, gave audible indications of being far advanced in the land of dreams, and our sad communion was undisturbed.

At length, when our mutual passion had subsided, and my poor uncle had indulged in numerous self-reproaches, at having reduced himself to such a condition that he could not even look his own nephew in the face, I obtained from him an explanation of the cruel dilemma in which he was placed. From the account he gave me, and subsequent disclosures during his trial, the following appears to be a correct narrative of the tragicomic adventure which had led to his incarceration.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN O'FLAHERTY.

TO his own amazement, and that of all others who knew him, my poor uncle had been for a long time getting on with a steadiness and sobriety that were winning him golden opinions from the constituted authorities ; when his evil destiny threw into his pocket the sum of £21 5s. 6d., old prize money, and from that period his ruin may be safely dated.

It was not for the money, *per se*, that he cared a rush ; nor was he dazzled by the

large amount, having frequently had much more in his possession; but then it was company's money, which my uncle always justly considered as a sacred deposit. Now, however, he had twenty guineas of his own, honourably and dearly earned; on which there was no earthly claim, and which, in fact, was a perfect superfluity, his pay being fully adequate to all his wants and wishes. Having, also, no poor relation with whom to share this treasure, his first thought was to give a grand entertainment to the whole garrison; but this he found was inadmissible. He then hit upon some other equally prudent schemes; but finally resolved, as a *dernier resort*, to make a trip to London, which city he had only once had a misty glimpse of, as he marched through it on a wet day with a body of recruits to Chatham.

Accordingly, having obtained a week's furlough, O'Flaherty purchased a suit of mufti; including a handsome frock-coat,

frogged, braided, and tasselled according to the military fashion of the day. He then booked himself an inside passenger in the stage, and started for London ; having first taken the precaution to pin up the mouth of that pocket in which he had deposited a green silk purse containing the remainder of his prize money, together with five or six pounds belonging to the company of which he was pay-sergeant. He had also under his charge, I must not forget to state, a handsome mahogany case, containing the favourite duelling pistols of Alphabet Hopkins, which he was commissioned to get cleaned and put in order by the maker in London.

My uncle, on arriving in the metropolis, having walked up one street and down another, till he was well nigh tired ; dropped into a coffee-house, ordered a chop and a pint of madeira, to which was subsequently added a pint of port (for he was determined on being very moderate) ; and he concluded with a bottle of champagne, just

to try the merits of that boasted tippie, to which he had hitherto been a stranger. When he had discussed these creature comforts and paid his bill, my uncle got up, in his own conceit as sober as a judge; and putting the case of duelling pistols under his arm, he sallied forth to execute his commission.

The fresh air, however, produced its usual effects: my uncle began to feel queer, and even suspected once or twice that he was not so steady as he ought to be. He therefore looked about for a place to sit down till the swimming in his head should pass away; and a billiard-room being the first asylum that offered itself, he walked in.

Strange to say, there was no one in the room but the marker, who handed my uncle a cue, and asked him if he would like to knock the balls about till some one arrived. My uncle had played this fascinating game in his youth: indeed, it was one of the idle and expensive habits which had driven him

to enlist as a private soldier ; but several years had elapsed since then, and he was now somewhat astonished to find with what facility he made hazards and cannons after so long an interval.

"Egad, sir, you're a clipper," said a young fellow, who entered just as O'Flaherty had holed all the balls and made a cannon.

"Oh, that's a trifle," said my uncle, strangely elated by his success and the wine he had drunk. "There was a time," he added with becoming modesty, "when I could make game off the balls three times out of five ; but I am out of practice now."

"*Per Bacco !*" replied the stranger, with a pretty little Italian oath, "I should say the contrary. I should be sorry to take a red hazard from you for five guineas a game and twenty the rub."

"Suppose you try a pool, gentlemen," said the marker, as two or three more strangers now dropt in one after another.

"With all my heart," said my uncle, "I don't mind if I lose a few shillings with you."

"Shillings !" exclaimed one with a stare.

"Shillings !" cried another with a laugh.

"The gentleman," said the marker quietly, "is perhaps not aware that this is a subscription table, and that half-guinea pool is the lowest limit allowed by the rules."

"Oh ! that alters the case," said my uncle, heartily ashamed of his paltry stake, and anxious to retrieve his character in the eyes of his new friends ; who were all stylish-looking fellows, dressed in the very acme of fashion, with gold watches, chains, rings, snuff-boxes and eye-glasses sparkling about them, quite enough to stock a jeweller's shop in Cheapside.

"What say you, gentlemen," said the marker, "do you think it would be safe to lower the stake a little ?"

"I don't know what Lord John would say to it," replied one.

"I know," said another, "that Sir

Humphrey would cut me dead, if he ever heard of it."

"I could never show my face at Long's again," cried a third.

"There's no occasion in life to put yourselves to any trouble, gentlemen," said my uncle, somewhat "flabbergasted," as he said himself, at these great names. "Sure I'm agreeable to anything in *raison*."

A pool was accordingly determined on, and two or three of the strangers threw down half-a-dozen guineas each, to be exchanged for markers to pay for their lives as they fell; while my uncle, being now put on his mettle, and full of confidence in his own good play, took ten guineas from his green silk purse, for a similar purpose.

Several pools were now played in rapid succession, in which fortune favoured the brave O'Flaherty to such a degree that, besides numerous hazards, he actually won the three first pools that were played. Then, whether his companions were getting more

into play, or whether he was bothered by such a succession of lords, dukes, and earls, German Barons, and Counts of the Holy Roman Empire, as beat incessantly upon his ear; certain it is, that my poor uncle lost not only his winnings, but also every one of the markers, for which he had paid his ten guineas. Heated, vexed, and mortified, he now declared his intention of playing no more.

“No more!” exclaimed one with a stare.

“No more!” cried another with a whistle.

“Well, I’m blowed,” said a third, a stout, bullet-headed fellow, “I’m blowed if that ain’t a regular do.”

“What’s that you say?” cried my uncle, with a sudden explosion of wrath.

“I say ’tis a regular do,” repeated the bully; “to come for to go for to win our money in this here fashion, without giving us a chance for it again.”

“I have won none of your money,” said

my uncle, "but I have lost a good deal of my own."

"Hark to the Irish gold-finder!" exclaimed one of the party.

"If you dare say that again—" cried my uncle.

"Come, come," said bullet-head; "none of your big looks here, Mr. Irishman, or I'll pitch into you, though you are such a hulking fellow, and polish you off in less than no time."

To show that he really meant what he said, he threw off his coat, turned up his wrist-bands, and put himself into an attitude that indicated the perfection of science.

"See here now," cried my uncle, giving the table a slap with his huge palm that shook the whole tenement. "Just see here now; I could smash you as easy as an egg-shell, if I chose to make a blackguard of myself, which I shall not do, for it would be as much as my commission is worth. But if you are really for fighting, as you pretend,

I'm your man, and this instant too, but it must be as a gentleman."

"Oh ! oh !" cried all, *una voce*.

"There is my card," said my uncle, who, in the vanity of his heart, had written himself down, "Captain O'Flaherty of the Slashers."

The strangers gazed in silence on this formidable piece of pasteboard, and looked at one another as if uncertain how to treat the announcement.

"And these," continued my uncle, unlocking the pistol-case, which he had placed on the billiard-table, "these are my weapons."

Here an indistinct whispering took place amongst the strangers, who seemed to look rather blank at sight of the splendid duelling pistols.

"Now," resumed my uncle, "if you really feel disposed for a fight, take one of these beautiful barkers, and load it to your own taste. There is a flask of glazed powder ; the balls and wadding all ready, cut, and dry ; the flints transparent as crystal, and a

hair trigger that won't stand the brushing of a fly's wing. Then take your post at the other end of the table, unless, indeed, you prefer fighting across it; and if I don't make a box of cold meat of you in three jiffeys, my name isn't Captain O'Flaherty."

This, of course, settled the affair. The serious tone of my uncle, and the unmistakable expression of his countenance, proved to the sharpers the necessity of a change in their tactics. They, accordingly, one and all, pressed round O'Flaherty, with expressions of regret at having mistaken his rank, &c. &c., and the pugilist made a handsome apology for his rudeness, which was immediately accepted by my uncle, who was as easily pacified as roused to anger. It was then proposed that they should shake hands, and drown all animosity in the generous juice of the grape. Some bottles of champagne were accordingly procured from a neighbouring tavern, which healed all sores, and gave an

additional stimulus to my poor relative's excited imagination.

From this period, my uncle could give no connected account of his London adventure ; it being all buzz with him, as he said, after he had partaken of another bottle of champagne.

Certain gleams of recollection he had, however, from which he begged me to make out something like a continuous narrative, in the hope of discovering some clue or other out of the terrible labyrinth in which he was involved ; for instance, he recollected that when called on to pay his bill, at the tavern where he put up, he found himself minus of his green silk purse and its contents.

Naturally concluding that his pocket had been picked by some of his quondam friends of the billiard-table, he was about to start back for its recovery ; or, in default thereof, to take it out in a sound thrashing, indiscriminately bestowed upon the shoulders of the knaves who had plundered him. To

this, however, the waiter and the landlord, and the landlord's wife, put in a demurrer, until the bill, amounting to £3 15s., was liquidated. This was a poser for my poor uncle, who was fairly at his wit's end ; when, luckily, the landlady opened the pistol-case, and exclaimed, with a gesture of surprise,

“Lauk ! only think ; I declare to my gracious if it ben't a box full of young guns. Suppose you pop them.”

My uncle, who had no idea of any sort of popping but one, was here let into popping of another description ; and, at length, with great reluctance, consented to the only expedient that could now release him from durance vile. The porter, accordingly, took charge of the implements ; and, after a short absence, very honestly brought him back £5 10s., and a square bit of pasteboard ; on which were written certain hieroglyphics that seemed to dance the hayes before his astonished eyes, as he gazed on them.

When my uncle next came to his recollec-

tion, he found himself half-naked and fighting in the streets, somewhere in the precincts of Old Drury, but with whom and for what, he could not possibly imagine. As he was literally "an Irishman in a row, every one's customer," he maintained the pass against all comers, and flogged fifteen Charleys in succession, till at last he was captured by a rush of a dozen from all points of the compass; and being handcuffed, and ankle-cuffed, he was borne off to Bow Street. Thence he was duly transmitted to his regiment; all bruised, and battered, as he said, like an old tin kettle that had gone the rounds at the tail of a mad dog.

"I shouldn't care a pinch of snuff," said my uncle, "for all the beatings in the world, for mine has been a give-and-take sort of life from my youth upwards: neither should I care for reduction to the ranks; for the first forlorn-hope will give me back the worsted epaulette again; but the disgrace, nephew, the disgrace of the halberts will break my heart."

When my poor relative was a little more composed, I asked him how much of the company's money he was deficient in.

"About six pounds," he replied, with a heavy sigh.

"Well," I said, "I'm pretty sure I can make that up before the court sits to-morrow."

"My poor dear nephew," said he, squeezing my hand, affectionately, "it will ruin you; and I shall never forgive myself for involving you in my troubles. Besides, 'tis of no use; for I shall be equally disgraced on account of the pistols."

"How much were they pawned for?" I demanded.

"Five pounds ten shillings," he replied.

"Well, give me the ticket," I said. "It may not be yet too late to redeem them."

"It's lost," he replied with a heavy sigh. "I cannot find it high or low."

This was, indeed, a serious blow to my hopes, and I now began really to despair of

saving my poor uncle from the disgrace he so justly dreaded.

“Do you think,” I asked, “that Captain Hopkins would consent to receive from me an equally valuable case, in lieu of the one he has lost?”

“Not he, the puppy;” replied my uncle. “He was in a towering passion when he heard of the loss, and swore a dreadful oath that he would take ample vengeance out of my back.”

This was just as I expected, and perfectly in keeping with the character of the man. I knew not, therefore, what course to pursue; and sat silent and melancholy, gazing upon my unhappy relative with a woe-begone countenance, even worse than his own.

“Well,” he said, with an effort to rouse himself; “there’s no use in sighing and dying, anyhow, and I must keep up my courage for the trial. My dear nephew, just hand me a *dhudheen** that you’ll find in my

* A short pipe.

jacket pocket ; it's hanging up on the nail yonder."

I searched accordingly, but couldn't find the comforter he wanted.

"Then it must be in the pocket of my new frock-coat," he said. "Just see how the villains tore it off my back."

It was, indeed, pretty well reduced to ribbons, and it was with difficulty I could ascertain which was a sleeve and which was a pocket. At last after a long search I said :

"I cannot find your pipe, uncle, though I have searched every pocket carefully—stop, there's a hole in this one, perhaps it has fallen down—yes, here's something between the coat and the lining—huzza ! huzza ! 'tis the pawnbroker's ticket doubled up !"

"God be praised !" cried my poor uncle, elevating his hands and eyes ; "there is at least a glimmering of hope."

"Now," I said cheerfully, "keep up your courage, and leave the rest to me. I shall

start for town immediately, and you will probably not see me again till the Court opens to-morrow, when you must ask the president to allow me to defend you."

He squeezed my hand affectionately as the tears rolled down his cheeks, and exclaimed in a voice broken by sobs :

" God bless you, my only comforter ! Sure it was Providence that sent you to me in my extremity."

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LONDON :

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

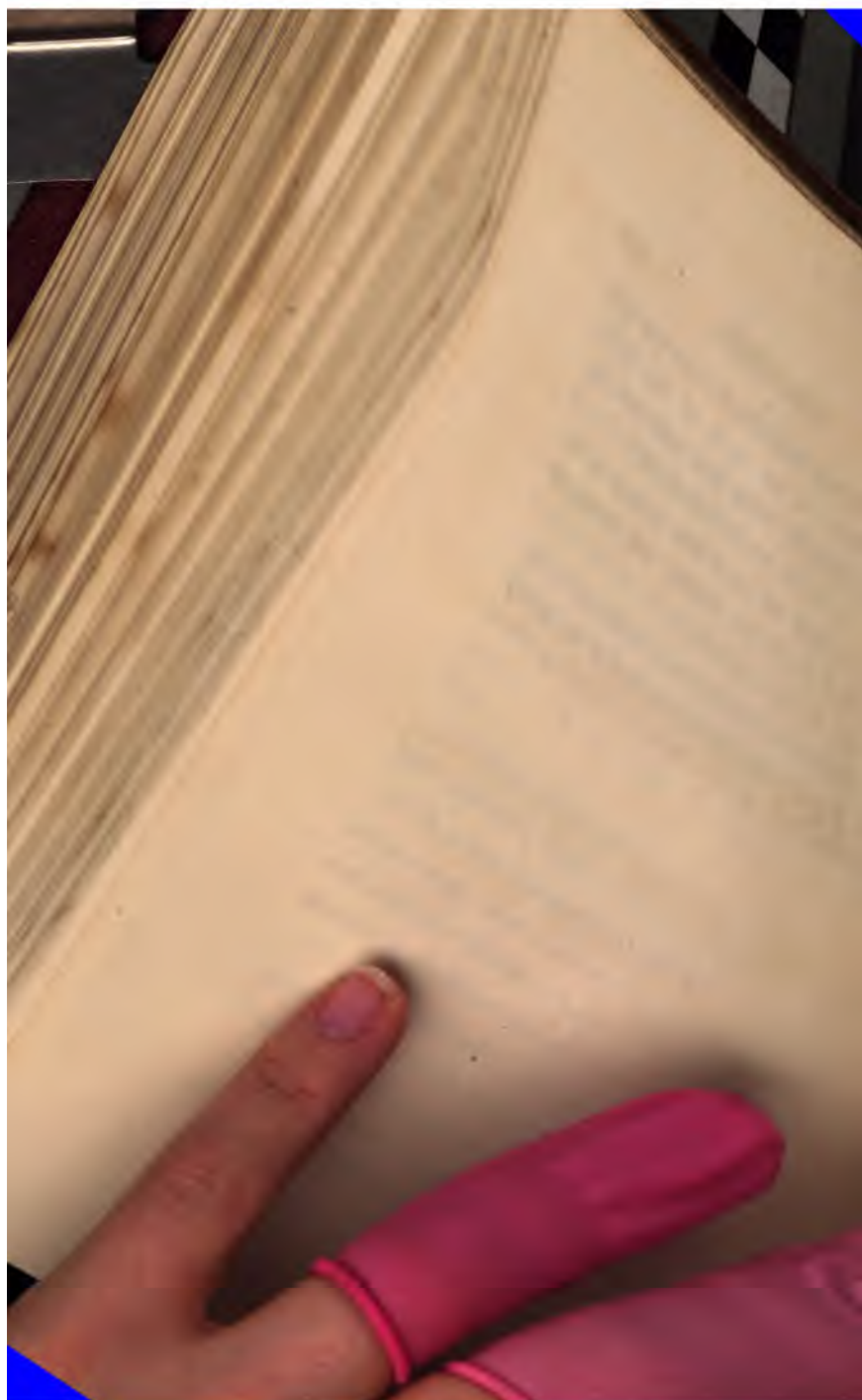
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